ENTERTAINMENT / E1

Fil-Am 'shocked' by elimination from 'American Idol'

NEWS / A2

4 firms raise gas, diesel, kerosene prices by 50¢ a liter

INFOTECH / B2-2

Hot items: 3G music phone, sports look of Blackberry

NEWS / A7

Kris Aquino bids temporary goodbye to TV, intrigues

Business groups to host March 14 poll debate at the Manila Hotel

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE PROPOSED DEBATE BETWEEN OPPOSITION and administration senatorial candidates to be hosted by business groups on March 14 at the Manila Hotel will push through despite the refusal of the Genuine Opposition to participate unless it is held at Plaza Miranda and not in an "elitist" venue.

"Some of them (13) candidates have already volunteered as that they will attend," said Francis Chua, president of the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry Inc.

Chua said the business groups were to get the sponsor the debate because they wanted to get a peek at the stand of the candidates on key issues, particularly those affecting the economy.

The 13 candidates had earlier accepted the business groups' invitation but begged off over the weekend because they preferred to hold the debate at Plaza Miranda which was more accessible to the masses

BUSINESS A13

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Monday, March 5, 2007 ★★ 7 sections / Vol. 22 / No. 87 P10 www.inquirer.com

Little tykes, big dreams

By TJ Burgonio

A LONG LINE OF CARS slowly crawled on the road leading to the television and Production Exponents Inc. (TAPE) office on Kasiswalan Avenue in Quezon City last Saturday.

Outside the office, a huge crowd of women and

LITTLE A4

99 special courts to try extrajudicial killings

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE SUPREME COURT HAS DESIGNATED 99 regional trial courts as special tribunals with orders to resolve cases of extrajudicial killings in 90 days and a warning that any delays would be punished.

"The speedy and expeditious resolution of these criminal cases deserves the highest concern by the judiciary involving, as they do, the most brazen violations of human rights," the high court said in Administrative Order 25-2007.

The order was signed by Chief Justice Reynato Puno and Associate Justices Leonardo Quisumbing and Consuelo Ynares-Santiago, who chair the Second and Third Divisions, respectively.

The high court said that in determining a "political killing," to be considered were the political affiliation of the victim, the method of attack and the involvement of state agents.

It said the special courts should give priority to cases of activists and media personnel.

The court said "mandatory continuous trial ... shall be terminated within 60 days" from its commencement and "judgment shall be rendered within 10 days from submission for decision unless a shorter period is provided by law or otherwise directed by this court."

No postponement will be allowed, except for "clearly meritorious reasons," it said. "Pleadings or motions found to have been filed for dilatory purposes shall constitute direct contempt and shall be punished accordingly," it said.

The high court also said all single-sala courts should be considered special courts for the cases involving militants and media practitioners "and for this reason shall give priority to these cases in their trial calendars.

It added that in statutes with no spe-

PHILIPPINE A6

Mayors push for Vilma

WINNING KISSES

The winners of the Binibining Pilipinas competition packed up during Saturday's coronation night at the Araneta Coliseum in Quezon City. From left: Lionel Veraso, first runner-up; Melisa Lee Cien Shand, Bb. Pilipinas International; Margaret Nolen Wilson, Bb. Pilipinas World; Anna Theresa Licaros, Bb. Pilipinas Universe, and Abigail Lesley Cruz, second runner-up. (Story on Page A2.)

Actress' candidacy for gov endorsed

By Christian V. Esguerra

IT'S NOT OVER TILL it's over.

Lipa City Mayor Vilma Santos may have already given up her gubernatorial bid in Batangas, but a number of mayors appear bent on convincing her to change her mind.

These mayors, representing key cities and municipalities in the province, are to personally appeal to the veteran actress in a strong show of support for her during the 7 a.m. flag ceremony at the Lipa City Hall today, according to two sources privy to the matter.

"Something big is about to unfold during the flag ceremony," one of them, who is close to Santos' husband Sen. Ralph Recto, told the Inquirer yesterday.

The other source, a ranking Christian church official in Batangas, said the mayors and other local officials would show up at the flag ceremony to express their disapproval of Santos' decision to abandon her gubernatorial bid.

Both sources declined to be identified, saying they didn't want to be the object of criticism of politicians in the already hostile political environment in Batangas.

Santos earlier said she would

PAYORA A10

CASHING IN ON POLITICAL ADS

GMA network to earn ₱500M from candidates

By Nini Valera

FOR GMA NETWORK, THE coming election spells big business in terms of advertising revenue.

The network hopes to cash in on political ads and generate at least P500 million from the senatorial candidates, the biggest advertising buyers during the campaign period.

Felipe Gozon, GMA chair, president and CEO, told the Inquirer on Thursday that the P500 million in projected revenue from political ads this year was a small slice of the network's total business.

"Last year, we made P10 billion to advertising revenue," he said. "So the P500 million from political ads is not really that big."

He said that the P10 billion from advertising revenue last year represented 56 percent of the total "ad spend" of traditional advertisers.

"Our programs generally rate higher

GMA A13

ABS-CBN: More money by 'simple arithmetic'

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

THE COUNTRY'S LEADING TV NETWORKS are once again gearing up for a full-blown war.

This time, it's not for ratings supremacy but for the big bucks that will come with the May elections.

An ABS-CBN executive described as a "modest figure" GMA 7's projected revenue of P500 million from political advertisements.

Deng Deorio, head of ABS-CBN's Corporate Communications, told the Inquirer yesterday that "simple arithmetic dictates that P500 million is too conservative an estimate."

He noted that there were 24 candidates in the administration and opposition senatorial tickets.

"Assuming that each (candidate) would spend P10 million, campaign expenses would total P240 million already. But you simply can't run a national campaign with only P10 million. If a well-funded candi-

ABS-CBN A13

Girl, 7, conquers bay in Palawan

ANA Kareniva "Kaine the Shark" Dulabajan swims to her feat.

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—Hoping to land in the Guinness Book of Records, 7-year-old Ana Kareniva "Kaine" Dulabajan yesterday swam across Puerto Princesa Bay, braving big waves, a scorching sun and the stings of jellyfish.

Dubbed "Kaine the Shark," the 3-foot-8-inch (115-cm) girl was joined by a cluster of other swimmers, including her two elder sisters, Shaea and Isha. Not all of them made it across, however.

The swim was part of this city's 120th founding anniversary celebration dubbed Bulaqueng Festival.

It was originally designed to cover a distance of 5 kilometers, starting from Barangay Sta. Lucia to Bayarah, but was moved to adjacent Barangay Masipagkaba—stretching the distance to more than 8 km.

Kaine and the others jumped in at 7:46 a.m. and reached Bayarah in 4 hours, 33 minutes and 2.69 seconds, to the cheers of hundreds of spectators, led by Mayor Edward S. Hagedorn.

It was not immediately clear if Kaine's feat would land her in the record books.

The user-edited online encyclopedia Wikipedia on the Internet cites a 7-year-old boy, Brennon

GIRL A4

Opposition abandons Estrada as campaign issue

By Amando Doronila

THE APPOINTMENT OF SEN. SERGIO Osmeña III as campaign manager of the Genuine Opposition confirms that its drive to sweep the Senate elections in May has run into deep trouble, three weeks into the campaign.

ANALYSIS

Osmeña replaces Mayor Jose Victor "JV" Ejercito of San Juan, who has decided to concentrate on his reelection in the core constituency of the dynasty of former President Joseph Estrada.

The dumping of Ejercito signals the abandonment by the opposition of the Estrada strategy of making the election a test of his vindication and political rehabilitation following his ouster in People Power II in 2001 and the plunder charges lodged against him by the government under President Macapagal-Arroyo.

With his narrow base and limited political experience, JV was not up to the task of forging a united opposition, and commanding the respect of the fractious United Opposition, despite his father's push behind the scenes to build a formidable machine to oppose the administration's resources and party apparatus. Estrada personified the campaign, including his selection of issues, by using his dynasty to implement his strategy.

During the past three weeks, the opposition's drive faltered and lost momen-

OPPOSITION A6

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WEATHER FORECAST

After cutbacks, oil firms raise prices

By Abigail L. Ho

AFTER REDUCING PUMP PRICES THREE TIMES this year, oil firms yesterday raised gasoline, diesel and kerosene prices by 50 centavos a liter.

Initiating the price increase was Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. at 12:01 a.m. yesterday followed by Caltex Philippines Inc. (formerly Caltex) at 6 a.m.

Total Philippines Corp. pushed up its prices at 12:01 a.m. today, followed by Unioil Petroleum Philippines Inc. at 6 a.m.

With yesterday's price increase, previous unleaded gasoline prices are now retailed at between ₱38.41 and ₱39.20 a liter, diesel between ₱30.48 and ₱30.80 a liter, and kerosene ₱32.82 and ₱33.28 a liter.

Before the increase, pump prices of gasoline, diesel and kerosene had gone down by a total of ₱1.80 this year, the start of the year with two of the price reductions taking place last month.

First this year

Yesterday's price increase was the first for the year.

Prices of crude oil and refined petroleum products in the world market have been gradually increasing these past weeks after softening at the start of the year.

During the first three weeks of February, the oil price of Dated Brent, a Britain crude averaged $58.26 a barrel, up from only $51.69 a barrel in January, according to data from the Department of Energy.

The price of unleaded gasoline based on the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) increased $66.25 a barrel as of Feb. 22, up from $61.59 the month before. MOPS is the benchmark for refined petroleum products.

MOPS-based diesel climbed to an average of $71.24 a barrel in the first 22 days of February from an average of $65.46 in January.

Fears over Iran

Many cite Iran's tension-ridden relationship with the United States as a factor in the organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (No. 2 exporter).

Iran has failed to meet the deadline set by the International Atomic Energy Agency for the suspension of its Uranium enrichment program.

DEFINITELY NOT A POSTER-DESIGNATED AREA

Posters of Team Unity's 13 senatorial candidates and the disqualified party-list group Abakada dot the view of the Commission on Elections (Comelec) building in Quezon City. Not only do the posters violate the Comelec's 3-by-5-foot size specification, they were put up outside the designated poster area. (For more election-related stories, see Pages A1 and A12.)

Top UP graduate is RP bet to Miss Universe pageant

By Armie Jubina

A SUMMA CUM LAUDE graduate of the University of the Philippines won the Binibining Pilipinas-Universe crown over 23 other contestants on Friday night.

Nicole Cordoves, 21, a graduate of UP Los Baños, will represent the country in the Miss Universe pageant in May.

"It has been a long day and for the country in the Miss Universe [pageant]. It has been so long since we had a winner," said Cordoves when asked how it felt to bring the glory back to the country," said 22-year-old Anne Therese Licaros after being crowned the country's representative to the Miss Universe pageant in May.

It was a pleasant surprise for Licaros, a broadcast communication degree and a summa cum laude graduate at the University of Asia and the Pacific.

"I never thought that I would win. I was just thankful that I made it to the top 10," she said.

Licaros, who is also a model, said she would continue her studies while preparing for the pageant.

Cordoves, who graduated from the University of the Philippines Los Baños with a degree in Agribusiness Economics, said she would take a leave of absence from her job as a research assistant at the university to prepare for the pageant.

Cordoves said she was "ecstatic" and "overwhelmed" when she was declared the winner.

"I'm very happy. I'm very proud to be a Filipina and to be able to represent the country," she said.

Cordoves, who is also a model, said she would continue her studies while preparing for the pageant.

Cordoves said she was "ecstatic" and "overwhelmed" when she was declared the winner.

"I'm very happy. I'm very proud to be a Filipina and to be able to represent the country," she said.

GMA to lessen campaign role to focus on economy

By Michael Lim Ubac

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO will play a smaller role in the electoral campaign in order to focus on the country's economic progress "rather than a daily catfight exchange with the opposition," Prince Spokesperson Igna-cio Bunye said yesterday.

Bunye said Mrs. Arroyo's decision to "de-emphasize" her campaigning would be carried out by the campaign spokesperson and the 12 Team Unity administration senatorial bets "while the rest of the Cabinet and the President attend to our people's basic needs."

Such a "detailing line," said Bunye, was needed to ensure that "restrictive guide are not held hostage to political rhetoric."

Team Unity campaign manager Bobi Guevarra confirmed the new campaign policy in a phone interview with the Inquirer, he said he understood that the President could only be called on for big proclamation rallies and the campaign's crescendo.

Administration candidate Rep. Miguel Zubiri said this move has "is clearly understood by each member of Team Unity."

"But definitely that will not stop her from calling us key leaders to her house for us," said Zubiri.

Buoyed by reports of increased business confidence in the Philippines, President Arroyo issued her own statement yesterday assuring the business community that the country would not allow the outgoing electoral battle to derail her from making the "hard decisions."

"Making hard decisions is not enough. I am resolved to see through the political battle and bring the benefits of the economy to the people," said Ms. Arroyo.

She said the economy could not be derailed by electoral battles that.

The American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines said Friday that investors from the United States would be pulling in up to $3 billion worth of investments in the country's infrastructure, manufacturing and information technology sectors.

Robert Scott, the AmCham executive director, made the announcement at a roundtable discussion with the President, noting the improved fiscal situation and business optimism in the country.

Bunye said said the figure would "potentially progress $4 billion in a year" if the government would "take care of some red tape issues."

"I think the confidence level this year is higher than it [be cause] some time last year," he said, in noting that US businessmen and other foreign investors in the country were are not concerned about the results of the midterm elections in May.

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Filipino studes to join Pope in world prayer

THE VATICAN HAS INVITED CATHOLIC Filipino students to join Pope Benedict XVI in a worldwide simultaneous praying of the rosary on March 10.

Asia will be represented by students of the University of Santo Tomas on the occasion of the annual Day of European Universities started by the late Pope John Paul II five years ago.

Organized by the Pontifical Council's Office of University Pastoral Care, the event had gathered students of universities in Germany, France, Portugal and Poland in prayer. This is the first year that event will include an Asian university under the theme "New Ways of Europe-Asia Cooperation."

The global praying of the rosary will be aired via satellite beginning midnight on Saturday. The Philippines' participation will take place at Plaza Mayor fronting the main building of the UST campus on España Boulevard in Manila.

The students will be joined by Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Fernando Filoni and Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines who will lead a concelebrated Mass there hours before the rosary.

Filipino bishops joined a pastoral letter in 2002 on the occasion of the World Meeting of Families held in Manila. The pope then was John Paul II. Now Benedict XVI was then Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, head of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Christine F. Esguerra

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Girl, 7, conquers bay in Palawan

From page A1

Hilbey, who covered 2.25 km in 47 minutes while swimming across the diverse Channel in California on May 22, 2006.

"I'm glad because I have proven, pinabuti what I had long wanted to do and I have realized my dream to be on TV," said Ursula.

Challenge to others

She said she was also happy because she had made her family proud.

"I hope other kids will try to break my record," she said.

Shebe is a Grade 1 student at Palawan State University and is the youngest of three children of environmental specialist Jaime Dalabajan. She was only 4 years old when she joined a "summer swim in Swim Program" here.

Undaunted of the strong waves, Shebe even looked like she was having fun during her swim, sometimes playing with the other swimmers and waving to onlookers at times.

Jellyfish in their way

At one point, coach Danny Igot had to egg on the swimmers to get on with their attempt.

The only problem they encountered was jellyfish. Some of those in the group were heard crying, "Ang kati (It's itchy)."

Shebe's teammates at the Puerto Princesa Summerhead Shah Swimming Team (PPSSST) joined in the swim. Those who completed the crossing included Jessie Mercader, Jeffrey Wilson, Garvin Castillo, Clarise Faith Lanucas, Abbie Pilapil and Maureen Mercader.

The girl's father, Jaime, said he tried to discourage Shebe from pursuing her plan to swim across the bay.

On Nov. 19, last year, she successfully crossed the 1.5-km stretch from Isla de Cuba to Sunwalk, and this spurred her to try and conquer Puerto Princesa Bay.

"Several times, I tried to stop her from doing this but I guess no amount of words could hold her back," he said before the swim.

"All I can say right now is that I'm so proud," he said after his daughter made it across.

He said Shebe had been challenged by the accomplishment of a 5-year-old boy, Justin Daniel Amin, who swam across the Mactan Strait in October last year.

Endurance, willpower

Coach Igot said that with Shebe's performance, "we hope that we will be able to gain more support and raise the awareness of the people regarding the protection of the sea and its environs."

The crossing of the bay aimed to showcase the endurance and willpower of the swimmers as well as encourage the private sector to support the swimming program of the city.

Igot said the swim was also intended to heighten public awareness about the need to keep Puerto Princesa Bay clean.

"We want the next generation to enjoy what Shebe and her generation had the privilege of enjoying...which is a clean area where fish can swim," he said.

Good grades, too

Shebe was 4 when she showed her mettle by winning her first medal (silver) in an equestrian competition in 2004 in Puerto Princesa.

Last year, she brought home five more silver medals when she joined the Southern Tagalog Amateur Swimming Association Sprint Meet in Lalaguna City.

Despite her hectic training, Shebe has maintained her academic excellence, consistently being one of the honor students in Puerto Princesa.

DALABAJAN is warmly greeted by spectators. CHRISTOPHER CUBELO

Corrections

IN "THE ARGUS 2 issue, a front-page article..."Money, personal differences split IEP 1st 8th. Dentist wars"—misspelled the surname of vets of the Association's sitting to claim Sit. Entered via the north side in May. The accountancy's name is Levi Hayahangan—not Sahyangan.

* * *

IN THE FEB. 28 issue, the banner story—"Gibi backs Gorgeous team's bid plea to COMP"—erroneously identified Rizalyn Sabastida as the president of the Association of Deans of Philippine Colleges of Nursing. The association's president is Carmelita Dimagiba. She is the one who appeared in yesterday's issue in a story on Page 16—"Team headed to OS to plead nurses' case."

* * *

IN YESTERDAY'S issue, a story on Page A16..."Gamaba Dlla 37 Gwa on bon, drugs-4-cohort"—misspelled the first names of 6 senatorial aspirant. The candidate is former Sen. Edgardo—not Eduardo—Angara.

* * *

THE ARTICLE "Is reason to literally Christianity" which appeared yesterday in the front page reported that the documentary "The lost Tomb of Jesus" should have premiered yesterday on the Discovery Channel. According to the Discovery Channel website, the documentary will premiere in the United States on March 4, but not in the Asian region. We regret the confusion.

Little tykes . . .

From page A1

stars with little girls in tow, milled about and barely lifted our frames under the sweltering sun, even splitting our sides to the task.

It was the registration day for auditioners of "Little Miss Philippines," a summer talent search of "Eat Bulaga" which is being revived this year after a yearlong absence. TAPE produces the popular noontime TV show.

The show, which began in the '90s, has produced the likes of Aiza Seguerra, a teacher's daughter and now a pop singer.

The parents and their excited daughters, who are aspiring to become the next child star via this talent search, never noticed that they'd brought traffic to a standstill.

"We were prepared for it, but we found the crowd unusually large," Rolito de la Cruz, the assistant producer, said in an interview. TAPE received more than 1,000 applications, a record of sorts, she said.

Only minutes

Registration took only minutes, but TAPE's office did not run out of applicants from 8:30 a.m. until 2 p.m.

The record number of registrants could be attributed to TAPE's advisory that the registrants would only have a day free for in Cebu said registrants could still be accommodated by registering at the gate the 8 p.m. deadline.

To large was the crowd, and so heavy was the traffic that the city's traffic enforcers were deployed on thoroughfares connecting to Xavierville homes.

TAPE guards had to send the parents and the girls home after handing to their registration but to through the grilled gate.

"As you can see, the crowds have dimmed out," said traffic enforcer Orlando Gerero, clad in a yellow uniform. He was standing across from the office and wearing protective eyewear Ray-Ban aviator.

Not required

Some parents thought it wise not to take their daughters along.

"She stood required to come, so I decided not to bring her," said Bernadette Reyes, 28. She had commuted from Garangulan Village to bring Clay register her daughter, Ma-Ka Mia, 5.

It was her daughter's idea to join the contest. If she wins, she will have money to buy her own bicycle, Reyes said.

Others brought along their daughters, to make sure they would be complying with all the requirements. They did not want to enter the once-in-a-lifetime crash at the door due to a technicality.

And even if the audition isn't scheduled until next week.

DALABAJAN is warmly greeted by spectators. CHRISTOPHER CUBELO

Japanese leader stands by apology to 'comfort women'

TOKYO—PRIME MINISTER SHINZO ABE will stand by Japan's apology for forcing Asian women to have sex with Japanese troops decades ago, an aide said yesterday, following an outcry over Abe's recent denial of coercion.

"Though there are many definitions of coercion, Prime Minister Abe has said ... that he will stand by the Kono statement," said Hidenobu Sobu, special adviser in charge of Abe's public relations.

Sobu was referring to a statement issued by then Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono, apologizing to victims of sex slavery.

Kono's 1993 statement acknowledged that many women were forced into prostitution, and that the Japanese military government was involved in some cases.

"He [Abe] has not denied the statement," Sobu said on a TV Asahi talk show. He did not attempt to explain the apparent discrepancies between the statement and Abe's denial that coercion was involved.

Abe sparked international outrage last week by saying there was no evidence that women were forced into military brothels, also called "comfort stations," across Asia.

"The fact is, there is no evidence to prove there was coercion," Abe had told reporters on Thursday.

South Korea later helped an official protest, accusing the leader of "glossing over the historical truth."

Rights activists in the Philippines also slammed Abe for labeling the shame as common prostitution.

Sixty-three surviving victims of Japanese sex slavery in Candaba, Pampanga, challenged Abe to come to the Philippines and hear the details of the ordeal that had scarred them for life.

The Hapinajpur victims, calling themselves Malaya Lola (Free Grandmothers), got immediate support from Socorro Ozaeta, spokesperson of the Japanese Peace Cyclist Network, who is in Hapinajpur for a weeklong bike-for-peace event in Central Luzon.

"I feel very angry about the statement of our prime minister... he [Abe] disregarded all the information given by witnesses and other evidence which had been acknowledged by Japanese courts," Ozaeta told the bareness in a phone interview.

Ozaeta said Kono's statement in 1993 "publicly acknowledged the involvement of the Japanese military in the establishment and management of the 'comfort stations.'" AP, Sheryll Bruce, Inquirer Central Luzon

Movie glorifies 'kamikaze' pilots

TOKYO—FABLED ISSEI, VICE ADMIRAL of the Japanese Imperial Navy in World War II, ordered the inspection of ships of using "kamikaze" pilots to fly their planes into Limited Scene ships when Japan was on the verge of losing the Philippines to American forces.

The first kamikaze attack took place off the coast of Leyte in the Philippines in 1944 and its success led to the recruitment of more young men to volunteer for suicide.

More than 2,000 planes were used and 34 US ships were sunk in Japanese suicide attacks in the last few months of the war, according to a Japanese news bigwig.

"One thing I want to make clear is that the suicide attacks by religious fanatics around the world [today] are completely different from the special attack forces," Tokyo Governor Ishihara told reporters.

"They are random attacks on civilians. The special attacks were clearly acts of war," he said.

Ishihara has launched a publicity campaign for a film celebrating the bravery of his wartime "kamikaze" suicide pilots on Friday, as Japan struggled again with Asian neighbors over its World War II history. (See story above.)

In Japanese, kamikaze literally means "divine wind."

"Given [he for Wo," scripted by Ishihara, a 74-year-old nationalist writer and politician, tells the story of the young men, mostly in their teens and twenties, who were trained to crash explosive-laden aircraft into US warships.

Ishihara, set to stand for a third nonconsecutive term as Tokyo governor next month, posed with the stars of the film as a hotel in the capital, in front of a replica Mitsubishi plane of the type used by what were known as the "special attack" forces.

"I want to pass on the fact that those heroic young people really existed," he told reporters. "I think it will resonate in the modern age." Reuters

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Opposition abandons Erap issue

From page A1

vote. It has sunk deeper into disarray. The so-baptized Genuine Opposition is even more disunited today than it was in January when, everybody, who thought he or she was somebody, crumbled to come on board the bandwagon and coalition leaders arrogantly manned the door outdoors.

The message the public got from this disarray was that the opposition's campaign cannot be successful's run on highly personal terms, much less the shameless and popular theme of Estrada.

Senator Sen. Vicente Sotto III, a former friends ally who has crossed over to the administration's Team Unity as a senatorial candidate together with ex-Sen. Teofisto Guingona, has said the Estrada magic is gone.

Estrada a dead weight

Arata said he any more necessary. To put it bluntly, Estrada is a campaign asset and as no asset is a dead weight.

It may well be that the 60 senator committee has wrongfully think, pre-empting them to change horses in midstream with the appointment of Osmeña as ground campaign manager.

While it is true that Osmeña has considerable political experience gained from two terms (12 years) in the Senate, it remains to be seen whether he can re-ignite the sputtering opposition campaign. He has to reverse the opposition from the clubhouse, otherwise, its candidates would be slaughtered by a well-oiled and amply funded administration machine.

Nit-picking effort

The challenge facing Osmeña is that he has to revamp the opposition's strategy and team-up an issue to make the campaign reach fire across the spectrum of voters—from the middle class down to the poor masses.

Osmeña's reputation as a political strategist is on the line, but the first obstacle he faces is to cross the perception that he is an elitist, and an accommodationist, he opposes for the sake of opposing, to the point of nit-picking.

From his sweetness to hostile posture in Baler-Region last week while attending a family function of the Lopez clan, there is little doubt whether he intends to do, real hard battle. If it means he has to use force in repudiating the issues and misrepresenting the campaign.

Without prejudging Osmeña, he talked about safeguarding the ballot from stunning to avoid a repetition of the alleged 2004 election-rigging conspiracy of the administration, the poor performance of the counting and the failure to reduce poverty.

While these issues are valid ammunition for a campaign, they are not the issues that can "electrify the voters angry" sufficiently enough to enable the opposition to win at least nine seats and take control of the Senate.

Human rights issue

It is what Osmeña cannot claim the public misgivings that GO might be ignoring an issue that is causing considerable concern among the people—the human rights abuses stemming from the spate of extrajudicial murders.

This concern reflects the middle class's dilemma. The issue affects the middle class and the poor, especially the latter—not the rich. It makes people angry and inspires fear. The value of the issue is shore up negative votes on the dissatisfied vanity at the risk of the opposition losing adherence. This is the reason the public has much wake in the running of the opposition's campaign.

In a briefing with business editors and reporters last week, GO candidate Alan Peter Cayetano revealed the extent of the dilemma by saying the GO spent over the issue of Senator President Edward Miller and Sen. Francis Pangilinan in its Senate lineup.

It was revealed that the point to including Drew, although they have formerly proclaimed their intention to run on the GO team, is that the inclusion is not to be the mention of a "Dilawan" ticket.

It was feared that a third force would draw votes away from the opposition ticket and prevent a Team winning enough seats to gain control of the Senate. The result of this shortsighted strategy is counterproductive.

Disappearing crowds

What remains as a whether "Pangilinan-Osmeña-Roy-Illusion has been dropped and the team went into the campaign limping with 11 candidates, instead of 12.

Pangilinan is still running as an independent with the backing of the Democracy of the Liberal Party, reducing the chances of re-election. Pangilinan gained nothing from his changing camps but the GO.

The disunity plaguing the opposition has taken a toll on he campaign. Its rallies have had dismal crowds, reflecting the disarray. Cayetano admit over the proclamation rally of its senatorial candidates at Plaza Miranda, which drew a thin crowd of no more than 6,000 people, and by only in Makati City, supposed to be a stronghold. Osmeña, the opposition's mayor, who failed to deliver the votes.

There are wake-up calls to avert disaster. Osmeña's task is to take the hint. He has much work to do.

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99 special courts to try extrajudicial killings

From page A1

cial courts, the bundles where the cold cases have been raffled off should follow the guidelines for the special courts.

For trials of extrajudicial and media killings that have begun, the regional trial courts to which these have been assigned should continue the proceedings, and follow the time period prescribed.

Status report

Special courts were ordered to submit a status report on cases of extrajudicial and media killings every tenth day of the succeeding month, and failure to do so would result in salaries and allowances withheld and other administrative sanctions.

Perez has strongly condemned the spate of extrajudicial killings.

The human rights group Ifa reports has listed more than 800 victims of political violence since 2001. The increase over is 21%.

Perez announced the plan to set up special courts to try extrajudicial killings following recent visit by the UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, Philip Alston and representatives of the European Union.

Assault on rule of law

"The extrajudicial taking of life is the ultimate violation of human rights. It cannot be allowed anywhere, and it has to be resisted everywhere. Extrajudicial killings also constitute brazen assaults on the rule of law," Perez has said.

In the administrative order, the high official noted that the extrajudicial killings of political activists and media practitioners have continued by the Dec. 22 report of the commission headed by retired Supreme Court Justice Jose Melo.

The Melo report largely blamed the military for the murders.

The order also read President Macapagal-Arroyo's vows to abhor seeing the wave alarmed by the "sustained" killings of activists and members of the media and recommended the creation of the special courts to hear and try the criminal cases.

Kris bids TV and intrigues adieu for now

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

TELEVISION HOST KRIS AQUINO HAS BID temporary goodbye to television work in an official statement read by her friend and co-host Boy Abunda on the ABS-CBN talk show "The Buzz" yesterday.

Abunda expressed the hope the statement would end all speculation concerning the state of Kris' marriage to basketball player James Yap, who had been linked to beauty queen representative Roger Gromeo in a scandal that bugged media coverage the past two weeks.

Aquino said she was writing the statement from her hospital bed at the Makati Medical Center. Last Wednesday night, she was rushed to the hospital for the second time after experiencing "severe contractions."

She announced the Wednesday night emergency in her statement, saying "I came dangerously close to delivering Baby James at only 29 weeks. My contractions were very strong, coming at three- to four-minute intervals. My baby's heartbeat was weakening and my cervix was already dilated."

Precisely because she was "fearful about the condition and ultimate survival of my son," she said she would be taking a leave from television the next two months.

"I say a temporary goodbye to all of you," she said.

She reiterated that "in the coming weeks," her main focus would be on her "first born son (I can possibly be to Josh [her son by actor Phillip Salvador] and his baby brother."

She said she was taking a break not only from show biz, but from intrigues.

She stressed in her statement: "The only way I can succeed [in being the best mom] is to leave this speculation behind me and totally retreat from the public eye."

While Baby James was mentioned four times in her statement, there was no mention of his father, James Yap.

Dee Hechbel, Kris' manager, told the bosses on Edu Manzano would be pinch-hitting for Kris on the co-anchor game show "Game KNB."

"He had a taping today," said Hechbel, who is also Business Unit Head at ABS-CBN. "We are no need to find a replacement on 'The Buzz' because we have Boy and Cristy Fermin down."

DROP YOUR RESUMES OFF

JOB

'Cough up our money!'

Tonyboy Cojuangco was forced last year by the Supreme Court to return 111,415 shares of the Philippine Telecommunication Investment Corp. (PTIC) for their being part of the ill-gotten Marcos wealth.

All's well that ends well, right?

No sir! There is still the unfinished business of collecting from Tonyboy the dividends that accrued from the PTIC shares. He's not yet off the hook, until he coughs up money that belongs to the Filipino people.

And how much does Tonyboy owe us in dividends? Up to 1993 alone, then Rep. Joker Arroyo estimated it at $500 million. In Congress, Arroyo railed at Tonyboy's family emerging as the "richest" in the Philippines, at the expense of poor Filipinos.

"In the Fortune and Forbes listing of the richest families in the world, only the Ayalas were listed but they [unlike the family of Tonyboy Cojuangco] did not reach the $300 million mark," said Arroyo then. "What we are talking about is $500 million... we cannot treat this as a laughing matter."

We, the people, are not laughing either.

Tonyboy must now owe us billions of dollars in dividends he got from the ill-gotten shares. **Justice has to prevail: Tonyboy should be made to return what does not belong to him!**

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, March 5, 2007
2nd Week of Lent

1st Reading:
Gospel:

Jesus said to his disciples, "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

"Don't be a judge of others and you will not be judged; do not condemn and you will not be condemned; forgive and you will be forgiven. Give, and you will receive in your own good measure, packed down, full and running over, for the measure you give will be the measure you receive back."

Reflection:

In this season we hear from many of those who have gone before us in faith—those who were faithful, who trusted in spite of temptation, suffering and testing, and spoke out on behalf of the people. They did not model for our own living, but together. Daniel prays for the people who have done evil (do we?) and includes himself among them and asks out, "Justice, O Lord, is on your side." And yet, Daniel also knows God as "slow to anger, rich in love and compassion and forgiveness" and he begs forgiveness for all.

Jesus asked us that we must be like God and be other-oriented in our compassion—we must love with generosity, that is shared and given to all, even to our enemies. We must be slow to judge and to condemn and to murder with murder that we fall into that group first and foremost. We are to pardon, give and give without measure so that we might know the measure of our God's compassion towards us.

Sources: Bible Reflections for Every Day, CBP P.O. Box 4, Quezon City 1100 (Manila Office) Tel. 921-9496; Fax: 921-9497; e-mail: cbp@pacific.net.ph; Rev. Jerome D. Lucca, SVD, Lectionary for Mass for the Philippines, 2nd Edition, Word and Life Publications, 4 http://www.liturgicalyear.org (Chronicle, RC) Scripture is the Philippines

DEFENSE Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. (left) and Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon hold up an election poster of party-list group Bayan Muna that was allegedly recovered by soldiers after an encounter with New People's Army rebels in Tarlac, Davao City, on Feb. 28 during which two soldiers were killed. AUNG KWA (MALACAÑANG PHOTO BUREAU)

Esperon: Troops deployed upon people's request

By Joffrey M. Tupas and Dennis Jay Santos
Inquirer Mindanao

DAVAO CITY—ARMED FORCES OF THE Philippines Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon denied allegations that soldiers deployed in Metro Manila and some remote areas of the country were campaigning against party-list groups alleged to have links with the Communist Party of the Philippines.

Esperon, who accompanied Defense Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. in a visit to Mindanao on Saturday, said in a media roundtable that countries to claims of party-list groups, the deployment of military troops in Metro Manila was actually upon the request of local government leaders in such "things and to stop the recruitment of groups always seen as the enemy."

He did not elaborate on his statement but stressed that the presence of troops in the three areas of Metro Manila and other parts of the country was actually appreciated by many and should not be interpreted as a move against party-list groups.

"If the soldiers are electioneering, then we have to look at it and conduct an investigation. [Those] are deployed in areas are not even armed. [They are] soldiers who are involved in civic actions," Esperon said.

He said that it was actually the local residents themselves who did not want the presence of party-list groups.

"Ayaw na ng mga tao sa party-list. [The people do not like the party-list]," he said.

Early this month, party-list group members were turned away by residents of villages they had tried to visit, Esperon said.

This, he said, happened in the barangays of Lupang Pangako in Bicutan and Commonwealth in Quezon City.

Military spokesperson Lt. Col. Bartolome Bacarro identified the groups as Bayan Muna and Gabriela.

"They (leaders of Bayan Muna and Gabriela) are just putting color to the presence of the military in these areas. We are not involved in electioneering, it is part of the military's programs to safeguard villages against lawless elements," Bacarro said.

PAF to buy 26 trainer aircraft

THE PHILIPPINE AIR FORCE (PAF) IS FORTIfying its fleet of trainer and service aircraft this year, a measure that it hopes would speed up the training of new recruits to replace a significant number of pilots who have left the service for commercial flying assignments.

PAF chief Lt. Gen. Horacio Tolentino said the Air Force will buy 26 additional trainer aircraft. Bidding will be scheduled soon to restore the fleet batch of planes by the last quarter of the year.

The new acquisitions will help cut down the waiting time of new PAF recruits for pilot training.

Addressing the PAF's dire lack of equipment, Tolentino said many junior officers from the 2003 and 2004 batches were still "queued for training" and were assigned instead to ceremonial units while awaiting their turn to fly.

"Our training aircraft are not enough to accommodate the number of training pilots. At this time, many are essentially and waiting for pilot training. We need equipment to train them," Tolentino told reporters in a press briefing at Villamor Air Base last week.

Currently, the PAF has nine T-41D planes for primary training, the first stage of the roughly-year-and-a-half pilot training, and six SF-260M Marchetti used for basic maneuvers. Fernando Air Base in Lipa City, last year, 97 new pilots graduated.

The Air Force has the capacity to train 50 pilots per class for a period of 18 months, Tolentino said.

When the trainer planes arrive, training could take less than a year, Tolentino said. He said they were preparing a training facility in General Santos City, where good soaring weather makes continuous training possible, and Tolentino [illegible]. Inviting Quintanilla

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Telecom firm ordered to pay taxes

By Lala D. Salamero

THE SUPREME Court has denied the plea of Digitel Telecommunications Philippines Inc. (Digitel) to be exempted from having to pay provincial franchise and real property taxes in Pangasinan.

The high tribunal upheld the ruling of the Sandiganbayan Special Third Court that Digitel should pay the taxes and penalties in connection with the legislative franchise allowed the company to pay the national franchise tax to the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR).

The high court said earlier rulings of the national had made it clear that Section 23 of the Public Telecommunications Policy Act, which says that any advantage, privilege or immunity granted under existing franchises shall be given to any entity currently enjoying such franchises, did not intend to exempt Digitel from all tax payments.

Digitel had claimed that it had remitted to the same tax exemptions granted to Globe Mackay Cable and Radio Corp., Smart Information Technologies Corp. and Bell Telecommunications Philippines Inc. The three companies' legislative franchises allow them to pay only their income tax and a national franchise tax in lieu of all taxes on their franchises.

But the high court said Section 23 was only meant to exempt other franchise holders from regulatory or reporting requirements of the Department of Transportation and Communications or the National Telecommunications Commission and was not intended to be a blanket tax exemption, as held to earlier decisions.

10% VAT

The tribunal pointed out that another law had been passed abolishing the franchise tax on telecommunications companies, and in its place, a 10-percent value-added tax was imposed.

This means the "in lieu of all taxes" provision in the franchises of other telecommunications companies has become inoperative, and that Digitel was not required to pay a national franchise tax and should pay the VAT.

As for the real property tax, the high court said Digitel was only exempt from paying real property taxes in the real properties "actually, directly and exclusively used" by it, pursuant to its franchise.

Effectivity

But it added that the exemption was only effective when Digitel's franchise was granted and which took effect on Feb. 17, 1994.

"In view of the unequivocal intent of Congress to exempt from real property tax those real properties actually, directly and exclusively used by petitioner Digitel in the pursuit of its franchise, respondent Province of Pangasinan can only levy real property tax on the remaining real properties which are not exempt from taxation within its territorial jurisdiction as part of the above-cited classification, land exemption, however, merely applies to the period prior to the effectivity of petitioner Digitel's legislative franchise and not a moment sooner," the high court ruled.

It also ordered the Pangasinan government to recognize Digitel's liability based on its ruling.

Pertinent provisions of law enforcing statutory provisions, penalties and surcharges should also apply to Digitel's liabilities, it added.

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SYTEC

Olongapo pols fight for piece of Chiz

By Artyn-dela Cruz

THEY ALL WANTED A PIECE OF "CHIZ."

Governor Opposition senatorial candidate Sen. Francis "Chiz" Escudero was literally caught in the middle of a "tug-of-war" between rival politicians in Olongapo City during a press conference arranged for the GO candidate.

The incident which happened on Thursday in full view of local media involved incumbent Olongapo City Mayor James "Bong" Gordon and Vice Mayor Rolen Paulino who is running against the former in the May elections.

There were two versions of the story. One said it really happened while the other said it was all "drama" and that no such thing happened.

But a source who was with Escudero's party said the young senatorial candidate was stunned. "Chiz was speechless," the source said.

One account of what happened came from a cameraman based in Olongapo who said: "The mayor pushed Rolen away from Chiz."

The camera man was among those who attended the press conference arranged by local media consultant Armin Santos at Wings's Restaurant on Rizal Avenue near the Olongapo City Mall.

"I didn't exactly see it for my attention was somewhere else but a local media man who appeared to me that 'forced' the shovel[illegible] was the arrest used, si mayor si Rolen.

Santos said he himself was taken aback. "I was surprised at the turn of events because in the first place I didn't expect the mayor to be there."

There was even confusion as to who really had arranged the press conference for the popular opposition candidate.

Another source said it was not Santos but Mike Pineda who had arranged the press conference.

Eggie Catalan, a local broadcaster who is mentioned Escudero for his meeting above even radio station dwelt, said, "Rolen according to several eyewitness accounts was chased by the mayor who suddenly entered the restaurant where the press conference for Escudero was supposed to be held."

In a phone interview, Paulino confirmed that he was indeed chased. "It seemed that my lungs would collapse by the short burst of it."

Asked how he reacted, Paulino said he left the restaurant and instructed himself from reacting physically in deference to Escudero who is a guest in the Nationalist People's Coalition.

"Mka nakakabigay ilay Chiz kung para lang[illegible] lungsod ay pinahiyaan na lang si mayor na nauna si Ulol. Di would be a shame if we would act like children so I just went out and gave way to the mayor[illegible]."

Paulino, a former protégé of the Gordons, said the rest of the local media who witnessed the incident walked out withthem, leaving behind only the press of local station GMA and Pinoy Gmoop.

But Fe Vincenzo Jr., public and media information chief for Chiz Roll, denied the incident.

From Pilmay's Restaurant, Gordon and Escudero held a motorcade up to Gordon Golhope and then parted ways.

Escudero went on to Mission Restaurant where Paulino was waiting and there local members of the media who had earlier walked out.

Escudero declined to comment on the incident.

ELECTION '07

Teves collapses at Unity fete

DUMAGUETE CITY—A POLITICAL gathering of Team Unity-sponsored candidates was disrupted Saturday night when Negros Oriental chief dissident Rep. Herminia Teves was rushed to the hospital, after he appeared to suddenly lose consciousness and convulsed.

The gathering at the Bethel Guest House here, which was attended by about 200 barangay captains and local officials of the second district of Negros Oriental, was supposed to cap another hectic day of campaigning throughout the northern towns of the province.

The Team Unity candidates present were Mike Teves, Edgardo Angara and Vic Magsayay.

It was just after dinner and Magsayay was done with his speech when Teves, 60, began shaking. Semiunconscious, Rep. Emilio Macias II of the second district, who is a physician, rushed to Teves' and said had fallen on the floor, allowing Teves to vomit.

"I thought he had a[illegible] or a heart attack," Macias later said. "You see, heavy-footed and his pulse was weak."

Teves was rushed to the Holy Child Hospital where he was confined for the night.

Belleses, who gave a press conference here yesterday morning, revealed that after the political gathering the Team Unity candidates paid Teves a visit at the hospital and found him to be in high spirits.

Belleses quoted Teves as telling Magsayay: "Chad na attack when you mentioned that your wife is a lawyer." Belleses told Teves assured them that what he had was a simple case of indigestion. Abo Pal, Inquirer Visa

Cayetano drops 'Peter' from name

By Christian V. Esguerra

FROM NOW ON, JUST CALL HIM 'ALAN Cayetano.'

Senatoriable Opposition senatorial bet Rep. Alan Peter Cayetano has decided to drop his second name in the wake of the Commission on Elections' approval of the candidacy of Joselito "Peter" Cayetano.

It was a strategic move for the outgoing Taguig-Pateros representative, who noted that votes cast either as "Cayetano" or "Peter Cayetano" would be considered spoiled.

"That's why I agreed to my supporters on phone votes 'Alan Cayetano' in the ballots," he told the Inquirer yesterday.

But he maintained that the adjustment in name didn't mean that he was giving up his bid to disqualify the other Cayetano for being a nuisance candidate.

The Comelec on Friday approved the candidacy of the other Cayetano of the Kilusang Bagong Lipunan, along with those of 36 other senatorial hopefuls.

Even if the Comelec refused to dismiss the other Cayetano's bid, the lawmaker was hoping that the body would favor a parallel disqualification petition he had filed. The hearing is set for 10 a.m. on Wednesday.

"I have full faith that the Comelec will be impartial, will rule on the merits and see through this ploy," Cayetano said in an e-mailed statement.

He was convinced that his namesake had been fluted by the administration to spoil his candidacy. A check by Cayetano's staff in his namesake's community supposedly showed that the other Cayetano's nickname was "Jojo," not "Peter."

The lawmaker was not buying the Comelec's argument that the other Cayetano could not be disqualified because he had been endorsed by a legitimate party like the KBL.

He maintained that the Comelec should have given more weight to the issue of one candidate spoiling another's bid by confusing the voters.

Cayetano said the Comelec resolution "sets a very dangerous precedent and, in fact, encourages parties to field nuisances to confuse voters. As far as long as they are endorsed by a party."

Urban poor for Trillanes

By Fe Zamora

DESPITE CONLINE OPPOSITION SENATOR[illegible] Antonio "Magdalo" Trillanes IV, which unable to campaign personally has found himself in campaign outreach among the urban poor.

This was revealed by former Social Welfare Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman who said that during consultations with various sectors prior to the finalization of the opposition's senatorial slate, Trillanes' name cropped up among the favorites of urban poor groups.

Soliman said she was "surprised" by the outcome of the consultations. "It was the result of a process, and we respect that," she said.

Trillanes would have ran as an independent candidate. But after consultations with civil society groups, however, Trillanes was included in the GO slate.

Two other candidates—Bonigao "Sonny" Aquino and Jonia Bravo—also figured favorably among civil society, Soliman said.

She said that during the consultations, the group came out with criteria or whatnot core for

"We support candidates who are pro-truth, meaning candidates who will make disclosures accountable to the people, and we will support candidates with a commitment to poverty reduction," Soliman said.

Honesty, competence and integrity were also cited among the qualities of the favored senatorial bet.

Soliman said her group, the Black and White Movement, had entered into a "principled partnership" with the GO, an alliance of opposition political parties cobbled together by former President Joseph Estrada.

"We don't have a formal role in GO, but we do share[illegible] contributions on issues," Soliman said.

Run on Aug. 6, 2007, Trillanes is the youngest among GO's senatorial candidates. He has been detained at a military stockade while awaiting court-martial for his alleged participation in the aborted July 2003 Oakwood mutiny. (with reports fr...

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Noynoy to battle Tessie over Aquino

BAGUIO CITY—AFTER OVERCOMING the first hurdle in his candidacy, opposition senatorial bet Rufus Rodriguez "Noynoy" Aquino III is preparing for another legal battle, this time with his aunt, administration senatorial candidate Tessie Aquino-Oreta.

He wants the "Aquino" votes to be counted in his favor, and not to his aunt's favor.

He said his lawyers will file a petition today before the Commission on Elections, asking for a ruling on the issue.

Aquino, a three-term congressman and son of former President Corazon Aquino and the late Sen. Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino Jr., is running for senator for the first time under the Genuine Opposition slate.

But he found himself moving against his aunt, Oreta, a sister of his father's, who is seeking to make a female comeback under the administration "Team Unity" ticket.

Oreta was in 1998 under deposed President Joseph Estrada's ticket, running both the "Erap" and the "Aquino" votes, more than she was in other Aquino running for the Senate at the time.

If the question is not settled, votes for "Aquino" may be declared as stray votes since both Aquino and Oreta can lay claim to them.

Earlier, the Comelec had declared among the "nuisance candidates" ex-priest Theodore Aquino, a distant cousin of Aquino's, removing another contender for the "Aquino" vote.

In an interview during a visit in Batangas yesterday, Aquino said his legal team has prepared their own papers.

He said he believes a ruling from the Comelec counting the Aquino votes in his favor would in fact help position him and his aunt's candidacies.

"It will help both our campaigns because in that way no one else will be awarded property," he told reporters.

He said aides from Aquino, votes for "Noynoy," his only registered nickname, would also be credited to him.

Aquino said the Comelec should study who gets credit for the Aquino votes "whenever there is the possibility that other names will take advantage of it."

Aquino is not official candidate of the Liberal Party banner under Sen. Franklin Drilon, which has allied itself with the Genuine Opposition coalition.

He follow LP candidate, incumbent Sen. Francis Pangilinan, campaigning as an independent. —Nina J. Pantaleon

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

Vol. 23 No. 47

Running vs Dato

EDITORIAL

SAME A THOUGHT FOR SARAS ABANG MABULO, the three-term mayor of San Fernando, Camarines Sur. Last week, the United Opposition named him its candidate for congressman of the first district of Camarines Sur, against the President's second son, Diosdado "Dato" Arroyo.

It won't be an easy run, given that President Macapagal-Arroyo's considerable resources, especially those of the persuasive kind, will undoubtedly be placed at her son's disposal. But it is a necessary candidacy, because the people of Camarines Sur must be given a choice.

We are happy to note that Mabulo is highly qualified for the post, with his proven popularity and a reputation for competence and performance. But even if he weren't, the fact that he is contesting the post against the President's own son should be acknowledged and recognized.

In the first place, Dato Arroyo is—to use a crescent term of the political art—a carpetbagger. He hails from one place, grew up in another, but now presumes to represent the citizens of a third. Seriously, he is, undoubtedly a dynast—a member of the country's most powerful dynasty, seeking a free ride to public office, to join his brother-congressman in Pampanga. Ish can be congressman in Negros, and, of course, his brother in Malacañang. How else explain his decision to seek political office, in his own name, in another vote-rich region?

Finally, he is the product of machine politics—that is to say, his self-announced candidacy is the result, not of extensive consultation with political partners or of a groundswell of public support (as rumored, say, by public opinion polls), but of an ad-hoc, an arrangement entered into by the powers-that-be.

The many factions of the administration coalition had agreed, among themselves, to present Dato Arroyo as a unity candidate. For some time, the talk was he would run unopposed. By throwing his hat into the presidential ring, Mabulo has, at least, made sure that the young Arroyo would have to give the voters of Camarines Sur a better reasoning of himself.

The Arroyo candidacy is only one of several which are essentially unopposed. We will know the true lay of the land only on March 30, after the certificates of candidacy for local offices have all been filed. But whether there are more this year than before, or the number has gone down since the last election, this much is clear: Unopposed candidacies, by and large, are unhealthy for our democratic process.

Voters must always enjoy a choice. Why? Because political deals often with what the great U. F. Schumacher called divergent questions. Many of the problems in politics admit of more than one solution.

A range of candidates offers an electorate a range of solutions, a variety of interpretations of the problems and opportunities before it.

Because in our system there is no minimum number of votes required to win political office (all a candidate needs is to have just one more vote than the next opponent), unopposed candidacies are virtual coronations. This may be useful in monarchies, but it is antithetical to the very spirit of democracy. "One man, one vote" (the great principle of equality) becomes "all it takes is one vote" (election as ratification of a decision made much earlier, in the proverbial smoke-filled room).

So leave for Mabulo and others like him. May their tribe increase.

No food, no jobs, no homes—an economic boom?

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

THE POLITICIANS WANT TO ENGAGE IN a debate on the alleged economic boom. What good will that do? No matter what they say no matter what statistics they can use, it is the people who know whether or not there is an economic boom. The administration will naively present figures to prove increases in the Gross Domestic Product, the exchange rates of the peso, exports, etc. etc. These increases mean nothing to the people.

The people have no food, no jobs, no homes, and scarcely have any health care—the best indicators of the state of the economy. Even if a million politicians shout that the economy is booming, if the people have no food, no jobs and no homes, nobody will believe them. But if the people have jobs and enough food to eat, nobody can convince them that the economy is in a mess.

Administration officials are quick to claim credit for any decrease in the prices of goods or increase in the exchange rate. It is because of the sound economic policies of President Macapagal-Arroyo, they claim. But when the peso and stock market plunge, they blame it even more quickly on other much unclear.

Actually, neither GMA nor her administration has anything to do with the movements in the economy. The peso's exchange rate is going up because the value of the dollar is going down; oil prices are going down because there is no oil glut; prices of other commodities are going down because other countries are dumping cheap goods on us; our balance of payments is improving not because our industries are performing well but because of the blood, sweat and tears of Filipinos slaving abroad; some new investments are coming in not because of sound economic policies but because those "investments" are for money being laundered here; the budget deficit has been trimmed not because of more efficient government but because the administration has ruined trust. Now it is planning again to impose more taxes even when there is nothing more to squeeze from the taxpayers. There is still hope that the increased government income is due to the economic genius of GMA.

The true state of the economy cannot be determined by a debate of politicians who know next to nothing about the economy. Neither can it be gauged by the wealth of Filipino businessmen in the forbes list of the world's richest. Nor from the number of the cabinet secretaries or congressmen. Rather it is seen in the rising number of the poor, the increasing number of beggars out in the streets, in the growing multitude of jobless people, in the proliferation of squatter shanties, etc. etc.

The politicians who throw up themselves on the sword and troll of the taxpayers are merciful hose these realities. Others simply pretend not to see the increasing poverty. Self-styled economists look at figures written on pieces of paper and declare that we have an economic boom.

* * *

Mayor Toby Tiangco of Navotas is impatient over the delays in the signing by GMA of the Bill (already passed by Congress) making his municipality (and San Juan) a city. Once the towns are converted into cities, each will get (from the national government as additional IRA) 5 million a year in Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA). That is why there is a rush among municipalities to be transformed into cities even if they have neither the infrastructure associated with cities. As long as a town can fulfill the legal requirements on income, population and land area, it can be converted into a city never mind if it's as landlocked as any rural barrio.

Tiangco has another reason for being impatient. Thirty days after March 8, when the city hall of Malabon sees his rebel foe ousted, GMA signs it a plebiscite must be held, where Navotas residents will decide on whether or not they want their town to become a city. If GMA signs the bill next week, the plebiscite can be held 15 days after publication. That will be between March 18 and April 12.

Meanwhile, the elections will be in May when a congressman for Navotas will be elected. At present, Navotas shares one congressman (Rep. Eddy Sandoval) with its neighbor Malabon.

Tiangco says Sandoval is delaying the signing of the bill because he wants to invest as assistant in the bill. The assistant next will be the congressman, on his third and last term, to represent the new city to the Senate until a new representative is elected. That will deprive Navotas of P258 million in community development funds during the three years between now and the next election in 2004. Tiangco says. On the other hand, Sandoval, who is no longer qualified for a fourth consecutive term in the House, will remain as congressman.

The fly in the ointment is that Tiangco (like San Juan Mayor JV Ejercito) belongs to the opposition while Sandoval is with the administration.

* * *

Trouble in paradise. You think it is nice to live in an exclusive gated community like the Loyola Village, one of the posh villages in Quezon?

Think again. Right now the homeowners are in uproar over the "coup d'etat" that allowed to undersized group to grab the homeowners' association, which is now headed by somebody not elected by the homeowners. And all but one of its board of directors are appointed. The other elected board members resigned one after another because they could not get along with the appointed ones. The lone elected board member now occupies only a minor position.

The board of the Barangay Village Association (GBA) cannot get along even with the barangay officials. The barangay gets an annual P20 million subsidy to defot. But recently, the BGA board of barangay officials from entering the village, in order, the barangay cut off all the village's streetlights.

You think the rich think and behave better than ordinary mortals? Think again.

International mockery

FOREIGN COMMENT

THE RULING BY THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE sounds almost like an international mockery. While it legally exonerates Serbia from its responsibility, it does not specify the responsibilities of the self-proclaimed Serbian Republic of Bosnia, whose military operations under President Radovan Karadzic and Gen. Ratko Mladic finally are being sought on war crimes charges by the Court and on now most likely hiding in Serbia under the shelter of local authorities.

At this point, we don't understand who were those who murdered more than 8,000 Bosnian Muslims in or where they were buried.

The bloodiest genocide that Europe has witnessed after 1945 is left, so to speak, without an author ....

Strong, since the onset of a democratic Europe, has the memory of so many innocent victims been so clearly sacrificed on the altars of international politics.

—Le Giornale (Turin, Italy)

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Unraveling

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

ALAN PETER CAYETANO EXPLAINS THE UNraveling of the opposition thus:

"We waited for Jinggoy [the Wednesday Group, composed of Manuel Villar, Francis Pangilinan, Joker Arroyo and Ralph Recto] .... The opposition was arrogant in the sense that it assumed that we would automatically wanted to be part of its senatorial slate .... By waiting for them[,] we lost our momentum even before the campaign started."

Other observers would say it was true the opposition looked formidable late last year until observers' values a whole bunch of them were nothing to get into its ranks. It struck a consensus with the reluctance of people to roll in line before the administration's overriding effort, or to be photographed anywhere near its local operation. Or the opposition, Cayetano suggests, should never have waited in vain for the Wednesday Group's love. It might as well have waited for Godot.

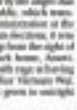
Herman Tito Lanuel, a staunch Erap supporter, believes the opposite. For him threatening a political debacle, he says, these downward trends can get well for anyone. In fact, he says, the Pimbus Day Group was threatening to create a "third force" before Erap moved to head it off. That would have blunted the opposition's edge by creating dissension and strife in ranks. To prevent such a pass, Erap reached out to the Wednesday Group. "I think that one of the achievements of Erap is that until now there is no third force."

In fact, it's another the one not the other.

The opposition is not unraveling only because it never traveled in the first place. Its basic disunion[s] are, or the mistake of the one associated with the so-called Genuine Opposition, is not that it waited for people who were never for forming. It is not that it did not get the numerous candidates it set out to convince, for none. It is not even that it made the wrong moves in the process of who to get and who to drop in its ranks, though this accounted only in a hypocritizing rather than unifying the future ranged against Gloria and Arroyo.

It is simply that it never understood the core cost of the present vote.

The ingredients of the present vote you see



Conrado de Quiros

easily in the Philippine elections of 1971 and the American elections of last year. Both elections saw the opposition rubbing the vaseline of the administration candidates in the mud. Unlike 1971, however, the mud that was where the local elections this May seemed headed to.

There are two main ingredients in the present vote. One is that the administration is hugely unpopular. And it is hugely unpopular because of one particular issue that has clouded the nation in the case of the Philippine elections of 1971, that was the Plaza Miranda bombing. The second is that coupled with the unpopularity of the Gloria Presidency is the overwhelming sentiment that the opposition is not worth voting for. It is the issue that exploded in the mind of the public, which translated into a rejection of the administration at the polls, in the case of the American elections, it was the issue of Florida and the hanging chads of the butterfly ballots. To persons such as Cayetano, Erap reached out to the Wednesday Group. "I think that one of the achievements of Erap is that until now there is no third force."

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The opposition is not unraveling only because it never traveled in the first place. Its basic disunion[s] are, or the mistake of the one associated with the so-called Genuine Opposition, is not that it waited for people who were never for forming. It is not that it did not get the numerous candidates it set out to convince, for none. It is not even that it made the wrong moves in the process of who to get and who to drop in its ranks, though this accounted only in a hypocritizing rather than unifying the future ranged against Gloria and Arroyo.

It is simply that it never understood the core cost of the present vote.

The ingredients of the present vote you see never was particularly important. The story line was:

Up till January this year, that was the potential story line that was unraveling for the May elections. The opposition looked impregnable not because it was itself popular—the pressure of Erap, the scandals in the administration and it would not be so, particularly for the middle class—but because the administration was hugely unpopular. Or GMA was so. Mayor had his Plaza Miranda. Erap had his Edsa Dos. He had his "Hello, Garci" tape. All the opposition had to do was hang on the illegitimacy of GMA's government and proffer itself as the hope of ousting it, and it had a cinch in the making.

It did not.

Unlike this year, I saw Alan Peter Cayetano appear on Korina's show with Mike Defensor. Alan was saying GMA would be the issue in the elections which would lead to an administration's debacle. Period! It was then everyone was crowding to get on the GMA bandwagon. Cayetano was the only person trying to avoid GMA as much as they would. Mike was saying, not true, the issues would center on the individual merits of the candidates and not whom they voted with GMA.

There are two main reasons for the awesome self-destruction or ineptitudes of the opposition, it's Mike's prediction that seems to be unraveling. All the mud rush into the opposition's camp produced mess a lot of frustrated squabbling that has since become the talk of the town, at this late date, with less than two months before the elections, the public isn't riveted to the story line about the money men (and women) of Sherwood Forest come to take on the Sheriff of Nottingham. It is being regaled with stories about lovers and betrayal, contrary of Eros and Hope and the strange doings of the opposition. And all the anger and outrage that go with the protest vote are going to the dogs.

Well, I hope some of it goes straight into the spelunking cave of Mt. Arayat.

But, Anne, the woman is lucky. If you're GMA, you're bound to think quite happily: With enemies like these, who needs friends?

Churchmen and politics (Part I)

SOUNDING BOARD

Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J.

AS THE ELECTION PERIOD MOVES UP, VOICES will once again be heard from the pulpit, and the charge of violation of separation of Church and State is bound to follow. It should be remembered, however, that the "wall of separation" of the Constitution, like the other provisions of the Bill of Rights, is a command addressed to the State. Thus only the State can violate it. As far as the churches are concerned, they can be beneficiaries of the State's violation of the wall of separation when they exercise the free exercise clause. Thus when politicians decry a violation by the Church and disturbance of the Church and State separation principle, what they are really doing is violating not only free exercise but also freedom of speech and expression.

The first provision on free exercise is found in the provision on non-establishment, in Article II, Sec. 5. "No law shall be made . . . prohibiting the free exercise thereof." See contrast with that, Sec. 5 adds two other clauses: "The free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference, shall forever be allowed. No religious test shall be required for the exercise of civil or political rights."

A violation of the free exercise clause by the State can come in the form of either prohibition or compulsion. Obligations of zoning and the like are legals on relatively few but not unreasonable. Let us just focus on the prohibition of religious civil or political rights.

This prohibition is a corollary of the guarantee of religious liberty. The purpose of this provision is to protect religious beliefs from attack by hostile officials and constitutionally disordered political privilege religious beliefs by test oaths or limiting public offices to persons who have or perhaps have properly prior to have a belief to some particular kind of religious concept.

Hence the religious test is to be opposed by law is overt and clear, the constitutional problem it presents is easy to resolve. For instance, if belief in the existence of God should be required as a qualification for public office, the violation would be clear. But there can be subtler issues of violation.

Not too long ago, the Supreme Court was asked to prohibit Jaime Cardinal Sin, Mike Velarde and other religious leaders from getting donations to their adherents on how to vote. The request was dismissed as moot and academic. But the substantive question remains alive, although no one of substance is pushing it.

One person who expressed it very strong language his opposition to religious involvement to politics was Barry Goldwater. The occasion was when the Moral Majority under Jerry Falwell endorsed the nomination of Ronald Reagan for the Supreme Court. Goldwater said: "The great decisions of government cannot be dictated by the conscience of religious factions. . . . We have succeeded for 200 years in keeping the affairs of the state from the unconvincing ideation of religious groups, and we mustn't stop now."

Eloquent the words may be, but the second sentence could not have been more inaccurate historically. If you mention is against history when the pulpit, as in Plymouth, was the platform. Churches have influenced statesmen politics from the days of Thomas Aquinas down to the prophetic preaching of Martin Luther King and the pastoral letters of the American bishops. Likewise, in the Philippines, religion has been involved in politics from the days of Father Gomez, Burgos and Zamora down to the pastoral letters on social justice and on the conduct of elections.

As not new this involvement is coming to an end. Depending on circumstances, it can even intensify. Thus it is legitimate to ask how religion fits into the Philippine political culture.

The issues I pose for broken down into several questions: (1) In their sermons and homilies, should religious leaders limit themselves to teaching general moral ideas, or should they draw specific political conclusions? (2) Should they oppose or support particular political parties or candidates? (3) Should they refuse to give counseling for public office? (4) Should they engage in movements (e.g., lobbying and demonstrations) that put pressure on political officials? (5) Should they advocate specific policy conclusions or should they limit themselves to general moral principles? (6) When engaging in debates on public issues, should they use religious arguments or only secular arguments?

These are some of the questions that come up when one analyzes the objections to religious involvement in politics. The questions are complex, and I shall attempt to present my own thinking on the subject.

First of all, it is not enough to say the Constitution guarantees the freedom of expression of the clergy. The issue is not such mere constitutionality. Neither is it enough to point out that although the canonist Judaism and Christianity have firmly held that religious duty includes active involvement in politics and that the Scripture indicates that God cares about politics and public morality, it is firmly believe that the pursuit of justice and charity is not the exclusive property of the believers. Moreover, I also believe that, when it comes to contests for the formation of public policy, individuals cannot effectively deal with the vastness and complexity of issues. There is therefore need for organized action. But whether engaging in it is limited or is an imperative . . . the questions I have enumerated need to be dealt with.

(To be continued)

Silence of the lambs

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Soraya Mustafa

PEACE IS THE DOUBLE PEACE AGREEMENT, and why has the demand for its "full implementation" become an expedience as a mantra for the Misuari faction of the Moro National Liberation Front?

It has been 10 years since the agreement was signed by Chris President Fidel V. Ramos and MNLF's Nur Misuari on Sept. 2, 1996, which led to the election, reappointed, of Misuari to regional governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

But what do the ordinary constituents of the ARMM think about the 10-year and the failed population of Muslim, Tribe and Tausug think? Frankly, my dear, they don't give a damn.

In the first place, this agreement, the ARMM and all the miseries we witness are now experiencing are the consequence of the combined vision of the two men — Misuari and Ramos — who started but failed, isolated, raped and looted us and our islands). President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (the double widow who felt obligated to fulfill Nur Misuari's supposed promise to Misuari), and that Sheikhul Mbacke, Norhata Guimalan (who thought he had to remain Misuari a just three, and hastened the death).

The agreement was therefore a bill of promises between Ramos and Misuari, period. We were not part of it, except in spirit, which never mentioned. It has not made our lives any better, only worse. It did not benefit us, it only made the lives of its signatories more glorious.

The promises that went into the creation of the ARMM was, from the beginning manipulated, contrived and crafted to project only the marginalization and disenfranchisement of the Moros, such that it would appear as if their suffering and humiliation were not their own making. In short, a grand conspiracy.

I was head of the media division of the Regional Consultative Commission that was tasked to draft the organic act creating the ARMM.)

The result was an administration nightmare, a so-called regions that was non-contiguous, with a constituency of several tribes and ethnic groups, ings speaking as many different languages, with no uniform level and standard of education.

Nonetheless, there was a lot of goodwill that attended the ARMM's birth — and much, much more, especially from the Islamic world, upon the recognition of Misuari as its governor.

A happy dialogue (like old buddies) kind was ended to me in 1997 showing us hand hugging for Afghanistan, economically and religion in particular for the ARMM. Interesting how much done were, and what for, it too-tedious a task for me at the moment. Where they went is probably the same black hole that sucked in all those appropriations and donations released for the benefit of the Muslim beginning from the Moro to the present.

We were not "neglected." We inflicted this region on ourselves by empowering a long line of corrupted and corrupt leaders to speak and act on our behalf, by entrusting into their hands our fate and our future, by allowing them to destroy our environment was the legacy of a colonial regime that did nothing but make us the laughingstock of Philippine politics and the civil service.

With the traditional respect we accord leaders that is part of our Islamic good manners and right attitude, we continue to look up to them, even as we can eyes and kept our silences despite all the embarrassment and the steady decline of our dignity as a people in the eyes of the Christian majority.

It was only this demoralizing history that when Misuari was installed as governor of the ARMM, we hailed the occasion and celebrated what we thought was our redemption from all our sufferings, and we willingly followed the Pied Piper even to the river.

We expected so much. After all, the Ramos-Misuari peace agreement, we thought, was paid with the blood of our true republican who gave their lives fighting for our freedom from a colonial-structured government and by the thousands of other Muslims who perished as collateral damage in a heartbreaking, lopsided conflict.

But none of them were ever remembered in the crafting of that agreement. And certainly not by those who have survived to see that their comrades died in vain.

The implementation of the peace agreement, or whatever part of it has been implemented, unintentionally infused the rest of us in general, even third-class citizens. This was what we deserved for resisting what was in the beginning a colonial government, obeying its laws and paying our taxes, while the so-called Muslim separatist movement was fighting against the United States of the Philippines.

The civil service, especially the undergraduate courses, suffered most. There most graduates were regularly delayed for months, and at times — especially after a change of administration — simply disappeared, never to be found. Their LGU positions were a favorite target of this magic trick that made hundreds of millions disappear from the LGU coffers. Consider Senator Ejercito's report in the Senate's Blue Ribbon committee on 2006. Fr. Nicanor's Notebook" related this current embezzlement in stomach churning detail.)

We have the sacrificial lambs in this deal between Ramos and Misuari).

We have become for convenience now that the one point was clearly decided.

We are all entrenched into a conspiracy of silence; we embarrassed to complain because this time it was our own tribe doing the injustice on us.

Too embarrassed to admit that we were used. We were pimped. We were conned.

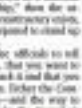
We are a joke.

Comments on subject: Mailbox@inq.com

Prove it's a lie

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III



THE BATTLE OF SYSTEM ACT GIVES COMELEC the power to refuse or cancel the registration of a particular group seeking a seat in the House of Representatives, on eight grounds: (1) it is a subversive group or seeks; (2) it advocates violence or unlawful means to seek its goal; (3) it is a foreign party; (4) it receives direct or indirect support from a foreign government, political party, or foundation; (5) it violates election-related laws; (6) it declares untruthful statements in its petition; (7) it has ceased to exist for at least one year; and (8) it has failed to participate in the previous elections.

A total of 123 party-list groups participated in the 1998 elections, 162 in the 2001 elections, 38 in the 2004 elections. This year, the Comelec has accepted 99 party-list groups. Any Ladlad, which seeks to be the party-list for LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered) individuals, was refused accreditation. The Comelec found this decision based that the petition for registration and accreditation filed by Any Ladlad failed to "declared for lack of merit." The reasons? The commissioners believe Any Ladlad lied.

The resolution dated Feb. 27, 2007, signed by Presiding Commissioner Florentino A. Tuason Jr. and Commissioners Rene V. Sarmiento and Resurreccion Z. Borra, declared Any Ladlad's petition "dismissed for lack of merit." The reason? The commissioners believe Any Ladlad lied.

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Any Ladlad and the Comelec arguing apples and oranges? True is, does any Ladlad believe it or not only has a national constituency, but supporters nationwide, a belief that the Comelec says it has not proven false; by means of "reports from its field offices?

If the Comelec believes Any Ladlad is a figment of its organizers' imagination, that it is delusional, and that it cannot claim a national constituency on the basic package of the bigotries of support

Comelec Chairman Florentino Tuason at 527-2220. Also, call the Comelec hotline numbers at 526-8305, 526-8306, 525-0162, 526-0536, 525-9505 and 525-9345.

If you're outside Metro Manila, call your regional Comelec office. Ilocos Capitol Region (077) 600-2167; Cordillera Administrative Region: (074) 304-2944, Region 1: (072) 888-1040, Region 2: (078) 844-1833, Region 3: (02) 527-6655.

Region 5: (052) 245-5147, (052) 480-8512, (052) 480-8805, Region 6: (033) 337-4324, (033) 336-3490, Region 7: (032) 416-9773, (032) 416-9774, Region 8: (053) 321-2045, Region 9: (062) 991-8578, (062) 991-2653, Region 10: (088) 850-0512, (088) 850-8269, Region 11: (082) 297-7221, (082) 297-2947, Region 12: (064) 500-2461, Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao: (064) 993-4811, Caraga: (086) 343-4678. Or if such events escalate, call your nearest prosecutor or mandate.

For a note to the Comelec at 525-9383. Write chairman@comelec.gov.ph or comm.tuason@comelec.gov.ph. Or to Commissioners Tuason, Sarmiento, and Borra at this address: A/F Palacio del Gobernador, Commission on Elections, Gen. Luna St., Intramuros, Manila 1002.

Learn a constant online in the Comelec's blogs: "Inside the Comelec" (http://comelec.wordpress.com), "James Jimenez" (http://jamesjimenez.wordpress.com), and "Overseas Absentee Voters' Blog" (http://ovav.wordpress.com).

If you believe Any Ladlad should be accredited as a party-list, you have this week to express support. Any Ladlad's case now is before reopening the decision of the Comelec Second Division. One call. One fax. One e-mail.

To his credit, Sen. Ralph Recto said: "[T]he Comelec may have its reasons in denying the accreditation of this party list, but what can't be denied is that it clearly violates the constitutional protection, which is the litmus test in party list accreditation."

Our national policy is clear. "The State shall promote proportional representation in the election of representatives to the House of Representatives through a party list system of registered national, regional and sectoral parties of organizations or coalitions thereof, which will enable Filipino citizens belonging to marginalized and underrepresented sectors, organizations and parties, to become members of the House of Representatives who could contribute to the formulation and enactment of appropriate legislation that will benefit the nation as a whole, to become members of the house of Representatives," Any Ladlad deserves that opportunity.

Of senior citizens, discounts, credit card

REVEILLE

Ramon J. Farolan

FIRST OF ALL, A MEMBER OF THIRTEEN DAYS ABOUT BEING moved from Sunday to Monday and from a hurricane to a cerebral layer. My response: A case of civilian supremacy over the military.

* * *

For many years, since my medicine needs was because of various ailments often connected with the aging process, I had tried to use my credit card for medical purchases which now run into four-digit figures on a monthly basis. Each time I would present my senior citizen's card at the pharmacy drug outlet counter, I would be told by the cashier that the 20-percent senior citizens' discount could not be given through my credit card, as the pharmacy drug outlet was not accredited by the credit card companies. It was futile to argue with the clerk or even with the branch manager, as they would invoke company rules which they had to follow. Not being very knowledgeable with regard to the provisions of the Senior Citizens' Law, and since the medicines were needed on a regular basis, the senior citizen discount was the only way to go. Thus, many times a month, my assistants and I would be scouring the senior citizens' discount even with the use of a credit card, and yet this discount grant in such a vital sector of the economy appeared to be able to demonstrate by itself what the senior citizen was entitled to in terms of discounts.

Last January, Carlos Hilado, vice president of Enterprise, Manila decided to do something about this problem. He wrote the Inquirer, asking if the Mercury Drug Incorporation of BA 9257 known as the Expanded Senior Citizens' Act, authored by then Sen. Noli de Castro and Rep. Eduardo Ermita, was covered.

In reply, Vice President De Castro wrote: "I would like to assure Mr. Manalastas that senior citizens can avail themselves of the 20-percent discount regardless of the manner of payment for the purchase of medicines."

Just mentioned in an earlier column, armed with a copy of the Vice President's letter, I proceeded to the Bantayog branch of Mercury Drug and presented my requirements accompanied by the prescriptions, purchase slip booklet and my senior citizen's ID card. After being informed of the total cost, I presented my credit card. To my surprise, I was politely informed that the 20-percent senior citizen's discount was only available for cash payments. After I showed him a copy of Vice President De Castro's letter, he disappeared for a few minutes. The assistant branch manager then showed up, informing me that the matter had to be referred back to the home office.

When I returned home, I spoke to Vice President De Castro, relating to him my experience. He immediately took steps to address the problem by sending a letter to the president of Mercury Drug Inc., Mr. Victor Q. Ineong. He informed the company that "upon presentation of the senior citizen's identification, there is no other condition imposed for the grant of the 20-percent discount . . . . This law does not distinguish between cash or not the purchaser is on cash basis or the single credit card."

In a lengthy reply, Mr. Ineong stated the problem Mercury Drug was having with the BIR which "treated the discount as a deduction from gross income instead of as a tax credit." He also said, "we are selling at a loss every time we sell to a senior citizen and each sale is draining our capital. Accepting credit cards in payment for such sales would further accentuate our financial problem."

In a meeting chaired by Vice President De Castro and attended by Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Trade Secretary Peter Favila, Finance Secretary Cesy Teves and Ms. Ineong, it was decided that the problems with the BIR were a separate matter and would be addressed separately. The benefits granted to senior citizens should not be held hostage by the latter.

Last Tuesday, Jesus Arches, chief of staff of Vice President De Castro, informed me that Mercury Drug had agreed to honor the 20-percent senior citizens' discount whether payment was in cash or credit card. The company would be sending our instructions to this effect to its different branches nationwide.

Two days ago, after allowing for some time to get the new arrangements in play, I decided to purchase my usual supply of medicines. Forty pesos relief, my credit card was accepted with the 20-percent discount being granted. . . no hesitation, no questions asked.

Let us thank Carlos Manalastas for raising the issue last January, something we should have done even earlier.

Many of all, we thank Vice President De Castro for his prompt response, truly in the human Magsaysay tradition of attending to the needs of our people who are up against some of the industry giants.

* * *

Rodrigo M. Fridays, barangay chair of Barangay 869 Manila, wrote to complain about a McDonald's food branch located at the old Quinta mall. Apparently, the branch requires senior citizens to present not only a senior citizen ID card but also a BIR TIN card before granting them the 20-percent discount.

C'mon, George, an ID isn't so? It is absurd to require a BIR TIN card for a sale of your delicious hamburgers.

Which brings me to another problem on retail transactions using credit cards, debit cards and automated teller machine cards.

Recently, Trade Secretary Peter Favila noted that a number of retailers have been charging differently on specific items, depending on the mode of payment. "For those using credit cards are priced higher than those paid with cash," he said.

Favila explained that under Department Administrative Order No. 38, "Where the consumer opts to pay online through cash or card, he or she should pay only what is stated on the price tag. There should only be a single price tag indicating the cost of each item. The price tag should be inclusive of the value-added tax for items covered by VAT. It is unlawful to charge an additional cost over the price tag," Favila said.

It is time for consumers to be aware of these rules and regulations so as to protect themselves from unfair trade practices. It has been said that vigilance is the price we pay for freedom. It is also the price one pays for fair and lawful treatment from greedy business establishments.

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Protecting environment in honor of our women

THE ECOWASTE COALITION, an environmental network on waste and pollution issues, hails the Filipino women, especially our mothers, for their passionate advocacy in achieving an ecologically sustainable society such as composting, reusing and recycling our discards.

In the process of nursing households into homes, our mothers have instilled in us life-nurturing values such as saving for our rainy days, doing more with less resources, serving water and even cooking notable feats with.

Above all, we thank our mothers for nourishing us with breast milk—the best and healthiest food for human babies that requires no packaging and causes no pollution.

As we celebrate the International Women's Day on March 8, we would like to call attention to the need to protect our women from chemicals that endanger their health and their capacity to bear, nurture and sustain life.

Work from each of chemicals being manufactured and traded globally, a list known as "toxic stuff" to find toxins in cosmetic products, household cleaning materials, consumer goods, toys and, so, on the air we breathe and in the food and water we consume.

Many of these chemicals are lipophilic, which means they lodge in the body's fat cells. As such, has endowed women's bodies with extra fat in their child-bearing and breastfeeding years, which means women tend to be more vulnerable to these chemicals.

LETTERS

As extensive sex these chemicals that babies are born saturated with contaminants. In 2005, the Environmental Working Group (EWG) Communications released a report showing an average of 200 industrial chemicals and contaminants, endocrine disrupters, consumer product ingredients, wastes from burning coals, gasoline and exhaust—in the umbilical cord blood of 10 babies born in US hospitals in 2004.

To honor our women and protect our children from harm, let us prevent and reduce the toxic contamination of our environment, which is caused by smoke-belching vehicles, dirty factories and products, horrendous dumps and incinerators, etc. Let us work together to eliminate human exposure to toxic hazards.

—ELIZE BLANCHE LICAYAN,
Executive Director, Ecowaste Coalition,
member-donor, National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women,
co-head Signet Coalition, Unit 1108, Eagle Court, 26 Madison St., Quezon City

Candidates should pay for 'cleanup' operations

I WAS VERY DISAPPOINTED TO SEE THE Quezon Bridge when I passed by it in the morning of Feb. 28. The entire central portion of the bridge was covered with the campaign posters of (correct) Pacific.

Question: If the candidates clean that down "supported" posted their campaign materials? I confess their knowledge, those who should not obey them? They can even connect or make a small number of supporters obey them. Or, maybe, the supporters did follow their candidates' instructions, after all.

Suggestion to the Commission on Elections and to the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority:

1. Allow only the use of banners in certain designated areas. No more paper campaign materials.

2. Charge the candidates concerned for the person or area in removing illegally placed campaign materials. The public should not be made to foot the bill in cleaning up their mess.

3. Leave the trees alone.

—STEPHEN UY,
phen444@yahoo.com

ANNOUNCEMENT

SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM
CIRCULAR NO. 34 - P

TO : ALL SSS MEMBERS, EMPLOYERS AND PARTICIPATING FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

SUBJECT : CONSOLIDATION, RESTRUCTURING AND GACION EN PAGO PROGRAMS FOR DELINQUENT HOUSING LOAN BORROWERS

Amounts are the guidelines on the Consolidation, Restructuring and Gacion En Pago programs for delinquent housing loan borrowers, pursuant to Social Security Commission (SSC) Resolution No. 764-s-2006 dated 26 July 2006 and approved by the President of the Philippines on 30 September 2006.

I. WHO ARE QUALIFIED TO AVAIL?

1. Consolidation, Restructuring and Gacion En Pago Programs

a. Delinquent borrowers under the following Direct Housing Loan Programs:
   a.1) Housing Loan;
   a.2) Corporate Housing Loan;
   a.3) Modified and Improvement Housing Loan;
   a.4) Multi-Unit Apartment/Condominium Housing Loan;
   a.5) Multi-Unit Employee Housing Loan;
   a.6) Group Housing Loan;
   a.7) Multi-Purpose Loan;
   a.8) Employee Housing Loan;
   a.9) Housing Loan Assistance under the Home Development Mutual Fund (HDMF) Law;
   a.10) Housing Loan under the Overseas Filipino Bank (OFB);
   a.11) Housing Loan under the Philippine Veterans Bank (PVB);
   a.12) Housing Loan under the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP);
   a.13) Housing Loan under the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP);
   a.14) Housing Loan under the Philippine National Bank (PNB);
   a.15) Housing Loan under the Philippine Commercial International Bank (PCIB);
   a.16) Housing Loan under the Philippine Bank of Communications (PBCom);
   a.17) Housing Loan under the Philippine Savings Bank (PSB);
   a.18) Housing Loan under the Philippine Trust Company (Philtrust Bank);
   a.19) Housing Loan under the Philippine Business Bank (PBB);
   a.20) Housing Loan under the Philippine Bank of Commerce (PBC);
   a.21) Housing Loan under the Philippine Bank of Communications (PBCom);
   a.22) Housing Loan under the Philippine Savings Bank (PSB);
   a.23) Housing Loan under the Philippine Trust Company (Philtrust Bank);
   a.24) Housing Loan under the Philippine Business Bank (PBB);
   a.25) Housing Loan under the Philippine Bank of Commerce (PBC);
   a.26) Housing Loan under the Philippine Bank of Communications (PBCom);
   a.27) Housing Loan under the Philippine Savings Bank (PSB);
   a.28) Housing Loan under the Philippine Trust Company (Philtrust Bank);
   a.29) Housing Loan under the Philippine Business Bank (PBB);
   a.30) Housing Loan under the Philippine Bank of Commerce (PBC);

b. Delinquent borrowers whose properties have been foreclosed with mortgagee's certificate of sale but not yet redeemed (one year of the sale);

c. Delinquent borrowers whose properties have been foreclosed with mortgagee's certificate of sale but not yet redeemed (one year of the sale);

d. Employers who are delinquent in remittance of their employees' housing loan amortizations under the SSS Housing Loan Program;

e. Employers who are delinquent in remittance of their employees' housing loan amortizations under the Pag-IBIG Fund Housing Loan Program;

f. Employers who are delinquent in remittance of their employees' housing loan amortizations under the Pag-IBIG Fund Housing Loan Program;

g. Employers who are delinquent in remittance of their employees' housing loan amortizations under the Pag-IBIG Fund Housing Loan Program;

h. Employers who are delinquent in remittance of their employees' housing loan amortizations under the Pag-IBIG Fund Housing Loan Program;

i. Employers who are delinquent in remittance of their employees' housing loan amortizations under the Pag-IBIG Fund Housing Loan Program;

j. Employers who are delinquent in remittance of their employees' housing loan amortizations under the Pag-IBIG Fund Housing Loan Program;

k. Employers who are delinquent in remittance of their employees' housing loan amortizations under the Pag-IBIG Fund Housing Loan Program;

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q. Employers who are delinquent in remittance of their employees' housing loan amortizations under the Pag-IBIG Fund Housing Loan Program;

r. Employers who are delinquent in remittance of their employees' housing loan amortizations under the Pag-IBIG Fund Housing Loan Program;

s. Employers who are delinquent in remittance of their employees' housing loan amortizations under the Pag-IBIG Fund Housing Loan Program;

t. Employers who are delinquent in remittance of their employees' housing loan amortizations under the Pag-IBIG Fund Housing Loan Program;

u. Employers who are delinquent in remittance of their employees' housing loan amortizations under the Pag-IBIG Fund Housing Loan Program;

v. Employers who are delinquent in remittance of their employees' housing loan amortizations under the Pag-IBIG Fund Housing Loan Program;

w. Employers who are delinquent in remittance of their employees' housing loan amortizations under the Pag-IBIG Fund Housing Loan Program;

x. Employers who are delinquent in remittance of their employees' housing loan amortizations under the Pag-IBIG Fund Housing Loan Program;

y. Employers who are delinquent in remittance of their employees' housing loan amortizations under the Pag-IBIG Fund Housing Loan Program;

z. Employers who are delinquent in remittance of their employees' housing loan amortizations under the Pag-IBIG Fund Housing Loan Program;

II. WHAT ARE THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. Applicant agrees to pay December 31, 2006 in full;

2. Applies for approval, signing of Restructuring Mortgage Instrument/Deed of Real Estate Mortgage (RIDREM) and Promissory Note (PN) on or before June 17, 2007;

3. For Consolidation Program:

a. The principal amount of Five Thousand Pesos (Php5,000) shall be paid upon application for the restructuring of the loan. The amount of the amount of less than Php5,000, the borrower may still qualify for the restructuring of the loan, provided that the amount of less than Php5,000 shall be paid in full upon application for the restructuring of the loan.

b. The amount of penalty and (c) to be condoned is equivalent to the amount paid by the borrower pursuant to the restructuring plan for 100% of the penalty and 50% of the amortization paid. The amount of 50% of the (c) is collectible from the borrower.

If the loan obligation (Principal, Interest, and Penalties) is fully paid, amortized over 60% of the (a) and (b) combined.

Example: Statement of Account as of Sept. 30, 2006

Principal	Php 30,000
Interest	Php 30,000
Penalty	Php 30,000
Penalty (c)	Php 30,000
Condonation (c)	Php 30,000
Condonation Penalty	Php 30,000

In the above example, supposing the borrower paid Php 10,000 to avail of the consolidation, the application of the payment will be as follows:

Principal	Php 10,000
Interest	Php 10,000
Penalty	Php 10,000
Penalty (c)	Php 10,000
Condonation (c)	Php 10,000
Condonation Penalty	Php 10

Across the NATION

Cop chief sacked, but 'jueteng' persists

BAYOMBONG, NUEVA VIZCAYA—EVEN THE IMPENDING relief of the provincial police director here did not deter gambling lords from reviving jueteng in the province, which entered its second week of operations following almost two months of stoppage.

Its collection for the illegal lottery continued in various towns here despite reports that the revised operations had begun with the relief of Supt. Nieves Victoria's top police official, supposedly for the police's failure to prevent the return of illegal gambling activities.

It was the first time in the province that jueteng activities did not stop after the election period, bringing public pressure here that local officials enjoyed full control of illegal gambling operations in their areas.

The illegal numbers game here and in other provinces in Cagayan Valley also resumed to its pre-election level last month of Chief Supt. Jefferson Soriano as regional police director.

Police sources earlier blamed the incumbent officials' preparations for the May 14 local elections, with jueteng payola purported to be their main source of campaign funds.

"[The continued operation of jueteng] is a clear indication that local officials, not the police, have the final say on whether or not illegal gambling should exist in an area," said a source familiar with the operations of the police here.

He cited as incumbent local official here who has reportedly been distributing funds to residents and various grievance teams using funds supposedly coming from bribes from jueteng financiers.

Police report the spending spree to become more intense as the campaign draws near. The politicians don't mind; it is not their money anyway," the source said.

Senior Supt. Cesar Javier, outgoing Ifugao Occupa police director, on Sunday said jueteng operators were taking advantage of his relief from his post, which was announced as early as last week.

Javier, however, belied speculations that his relief was due to his perceived failure to stop the revival of jueteng operations here.

"Gen. [Lukas] Casamora did not accept [my nomination] as the next police director so [the Philippine National Police headquarters] sent her a new set of nominees). It was my time to leave as I have been overstaying as [officer-in-charge]," he said.

He said Senior Supt. Segundo Ouano, who was the governor's personal choice, would take over as police director here today.

Javier clarified that even as he was preparing to leave, he had instructed chiefs of police to conduct anti-illegal gambling operations in their areas. Melvin Gascon, Inquirer Northern Luzon

HEALTHY CHOICE FOR A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE
BANABA GREEN TEA
For Urinary Tract Infection, KIDNEY and BLADDER Problems.
Health and Lifestyles

20 nabbed in Eastern Visayas for violations of gun ban law

By Joey A. Gabieta
Inquirer Visayas

TACLOBAN CITY—ABOUT 20 PEOPLE, including an army sergeant, have been arrested in Eastern Visayas since the imposition of gun ban last Jan. 14.

Regional police director Chief Supt. Elmer de la Paz said the arrests of these people proved that the law enforcers in the region were determined to stop the proliferation of loose and unlicensed firearms.

"We don't take into consideration the position of the persons arrested. Otherwise, our campaign on gun ban related to the forthcoming elections would be toothless," De la Paz said.

De la Paz identified the arrested army sergeant as Sergeant Sevillano, who was found to have in his possession a .45 caliber pistol at a checkpoint in Calbayog City last Jan. 16.

When he was arrested, Sevillano failed to show any documentary showing he was exempted from the gun ban, De la Paz said.

The police charged the Army sergeant and the 19 other arrested civilians were charged of **illegal possession of firearms, in violation of** the Commission on Elections Resolution 7764.

Of the 20 people arrested, nine came from Leyte while 11 came from Samar, which the police identified as an area of concern in the Mindanao.

De la Paz said the police would apprehend more people for violating the gun ban, particularly in Samar. He noted that the province has a "history" of proliferation of loose firearms especially during the election period.

However, De la Paz said the police remain on top of the situation as he would not recommend that any area in the region, including Samar, be placed under Comelec control and supervision.

Aside the election season bagets, several killings have occurred in Samar, some involving elected officials.

Danao Mayor Benito Astorga was gunned down last 25 while attending a village fiesta. Terso Councilor Virmundo Sinico of San Jose de Buan was killed Feb. 19. On Feb.5, Vice Mayor Fernando Langcay de Allmiday escaped an attempt on his life.

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German football players visit Ifugao rice terraces

BAGUIO CITY—OFFICIALS AND tourists here were expecting young members of the German national football team that played third in the 2006 Fifa World Cup but instead saw aging men weighing from the ribera when brought them to the summer capital on Thursday.

Those men, whose ages are now between 70 and 80, were players of the 124-year-old Hertha Football Club based in Berlin that won the German championship finals in 1930 and 1931, the reporters found out.

The team arrived at the Loakan airport to begin a two-day goodwill visit in the Cordillera that would take them to the world famous Ifugao rice terraces, a 10-hour travel from here.

"The retired players are traveling around the world to help the poor," Sebastian Lenzli, the group's German-speaking Filipino tour guide, said. "They had visited Vietnam before coming to the Philippines."

Uwe Harbeck, 80, the leader of the team, said they played with the Philippine football team in 1976 in a friendly match at the Rizal Memorial Sports Field in Manila. The Germans won that game, 5-1.

"There were about 30,000 people who watched the game," Harbeck said through an interpreter.

The Hertha Football Club, according to its website, was formed on July 25, 1892 in Berlin by football Fritz and Max Linder (Lorenz and Fritz) Lorenz.

In 1905, Hertha won its first Berlin championship finals. The team gained popularity in 1910 when they beat the Southern United, an English club, in a match in Berlin.

The club was dismantled in many world wars. In World War I, the club lost 26 members.

During World War II, Adolf Hitler mobilized these Hertha, a Nazi member, as the new president of Hertha to ensure the club's loyalty to the German rule. Allied forces disbanded the club when Hitler's regime fell.

In 1950, Hertha was formed again.

When the Hertha members arrived here on Thursday, they gave away caps to 62 pre-school children who were on a field trip to the airport.

"They love Filipino children," Lenzli said.

Immediately after entertaining the children, the team headed to Banaue in Ifugao, wherein they celebrated uniforms in students of the Sangsan Elementary School there. Ethel Kristian Omengan, Inquirer Northern Luzon

Month-long reunion for Alaminos folk

ALAMINOS CITY—THIS CITY will hold a month-long grand reunion for Alaminos residents personally based abroad. The "Uncle to Hundred Islands 2007: Homecoming" celebration will coincide with the Hundred Islands annual global homecoming and fiesta celebration on March 11-30 in honor of its patron saint, St. Joseph.

The occasion is expected to gather Alaminosans, Pollocanos and the tourism extended by Binmaley Bonuan Binguion during his business trips abroad to promote the Hundred Islands and open to doors to potential investors.

Bragunza said the occasion will foster partnership and connections with Alaminosans in bringing the Hundred Islands National Park back to the days of being one of the best tourist destinations in the world." Gabriel Lee de-Leon and Yolanda Lorenz-Pineda, Inquirer Northern Luzon

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Samar mayor, son face arrest for slay

By Joey A. Gabieta
Inquirer Visayas

TACLOBAN CITY—A TOWN MAYOR WHO IS facing murder charges in Samar province is believed to be out for hire six after a Regional Trial Court issued a warrant of arrest against him.

Mayor Joseph Grey of San Jorge has ceased to report to his office since Judge Soberito Betaidol, presiding officer of the Regional Trial Court Branch 38 based in Calbiga City, issued the warrant on Feb. 20.

The court, which did not recommend bail, also issued a warrant against the mayor's son, Francis, a Prime Boy and a John Doe for the crime.

Ore Luth Doctor, of Barangay Manod of the same town, accused Grey and the three others of killing her husband Rolando on Oct. 3, 2006. The victim was killed by motorcycle-riding assailants, alleged to be Grey's hit men.

Grey could not be contacted for comment.

Supposed police director Chief Supt. Bienvenido B. Pot said he had ordered a manhunt to enforce the warrant of arrest.

Jesito Landia, provincial director of the Department of the Interior and Local Government, named Vice Mayor Macalino D. acting mayor effective Feb. 26. Councilor Flerante Capanas was named acting vice mayor.

San Jorge is a fourth-class municipality (annual income: P13 million-P21 million) of over 30,000 people spread in 41 villages. It is 144 kilometers from the city.

Cy Jerard scrapped to Grey's place the case filed against him. "We should come out in the open if he is not guilty so that he can clear his name," she told the Inquirer.

FIREMEN train their hoses on burning homes at Barangay Tinago in Cebu City, hours after the launching of Fire Safety Month.

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What Drives You CALTEX

Fire official becomes victim after Fire Safety Month launch

By Jeanne Napallacan
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—AMID THE CITY FIRE DEPARTMENT chief inaugurates a fund office officials in launching the Fire Safety Month celebration on Thursday, he did not know that he would become a fire victim in less than 24 hours.

A fire that broke out shortly after midnight on Friday gutted the house of 6901 Allen Arcinga and 30 other houses in Barangay Tinago.

Arcinga said it was heartbreaking to see his house burning when he was one of those who only hours earlier had urged the public to be vigilant against fire this March, being Fire Safety Month.

Arcinga said he woke up just midnight and found his house and three of his neighbors on fire. He says he first spread so fast he only had time to lead his wife, children and his parents out of their house.

Being a fireman, he tried to help his neighbors outside the fire.

"It was very unfortunate. While I have to save my family I could not also abandon my responsibility to the public," Arcinga told the Inquirer.

The house of my fire marshal Supt. Ronnel Cedilla was also in the same neighborhood, but it was spared from the fire.

Cedilla said his house was just three houses away from the fire scene and he was thankful that it did not reach their house. Still, his wife and children had to be evacuated because the house was in total disarray.

"Now we can better understand as examples in our fire prevention campaign," he said.

The fire started around 12:30 a.m. at the chapel of the Universal Church of Christ, which is occupied by the pastor, Dominador King Arcinga, 73, and his relatives.

Fire investigators believed that the fire was caused by a defective cooking fan used by the couple.

Inz, however, said she did not see the ceiling fan. She instead insinuated that the fire was accidentally set off because some people, among the refused to identify, had wanted them to leave.

Cedilla said Cuel's claim would be investigated.

No property damage at P800,000. Fire personnel, including P/Lt. Ramon Molina, were slightly injured in the rescue operation, he said.

At least 70 families were provided with rooms as temporary shelters at the fire site by the city social welfare office. They were also given food supply good for three days by the city government.

2 soldiers dead in Davao clash

DAVAO CITY—TWO GOVERNMENT SOLDIERS died in a clash with communist guerrillas in Barangay Edwin Bell, District here on Wednesday morning.

Another soldier was also killed in the rebels in Davao Oriental in Monday morning.

The incident in Bell happened while the soldiers of the 73rd Infantry Battalion were responding to a tip from a resident about the presence of New People's Army rebels in the area.

Lt. Col. Rolando Jose Bautista, spokesperson of the 10th Infantry Division, said the soldiers were fired upon by the rebels while they were on a very difficult terrain.

"By fire maneuver and supported by attack helicopters, they assaulted the rebels, dislodging the remains of her facing them. The troops were able to enter the enemy position, forcing the latter to withdraw southward direction of Barangay Mintal," Bautista said.

A government soldier was also killed while four rebels were wounded in the clash with 58th rebels in Sitio Bandera, Barangay Catalunga in Caraga, Davao Oriental.

Bautista said the government troops, under the 10th Infantry Battalion, were on their way to raid a rebel camp when they encountered the communists led by a certain Commander Ryan. Jeffrey Tupas, Inquirer Mindanao

'Tagaytay 5' allowed to 'go out' of jail

CAMP FIDENTE LIM, LAGUNA – FIFTH their fetid bodies boiling the heart of their detention until midafternoon, hunger in the face they feared last week. The farmers arrested for being alleged communist rebels were finally allowed to briefly go out of their cell to exercise and enjoy the sunlight.

On Thursday, members of the base police unit agreed to let the so-called "Tagaytay 5" do some stretching exercises outside of their 25-square-meter jail.

The order allowing Ritel Caminde, Saul Pinpin, Rhobael Manayon, Rito Tindoc and Alex Sustiguyo to go out of their cell came from Calabarzon police director Chief Supt. Hermin Badoson Jr., who had earlier declared that they would abide by the recommendation of the Commission on Human Rights regarding the rights of the five as prisoners.

Among the CHR recommendations was to let the five prisoners go outside.

Although still reeling from weakness, Pinpin said he and the other prisoners were happy that the police allowed them to step out of their detention area even for a while.

Pinpin said that while Badoson's decision was long delayed, it somehow enlivened their spirits.

It was the second time in five days that the police permitted the five to temporarily leave their cell.

In around 8 a.m. Sunday, Caminde, Pinpin, Sustiguyo and Manayon were allowed to walk around the grandstand park inside the camp.

Tindoc, who is suffering from hypertension, stayed outside the office of the base police unit.

After one and a half hours, they were again brought inside.

Pinpin said Calabarzon police officials had also set a regular schedule of when they could go out of their cell to exercise.

They said they would be allowed on every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday to enjoy their morning rights.

The police have also painted the walls of the jail.

The inspectors tried to talk with Badoson but a member of his staff said he was on a meeting.

Inspectors said the camp doctors had allowed 5 here to exercise their rights to discuss their doctors.

He said physicians from the Health Alliance for Democracy (HEAD) visited them recently and informed them of their health conditions.

"The HEAD doctors said anyone of us might collapse as our health continue to deteriorate," said Pinpin, who has been complaining of low blood pressure.

Pinpin clarified there stated on the pleas of the Calabarzon police to talk the court for their immediate transfer to the Camp Crame.

He said all his group was asking was for Badoson and his personnel to respect the detainees' rights.

"General Badoson is missing the point. The issue here is not our choice to be transferred. What we want is for the police to respect our rights. He has, still can decide on our demands. If only they respect what is inscribed in our hearts," he said.

Despite the signs of goodwill from the police, the members will continue with their hunger strike until they are permanently released from jail, he said.

"I, personally, what we want is our freedom and to clear our names," Pinpin said. – Marlon Ramos, Inquirer Southern Luzon

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AIRPORT BOMBING RECALLED

Family, relatives and government officials remember the 2003 bombing of the old Davao International Airport that killed 21 people and wounded about 100 others.

A REMINDER TO ALL ELECTORAL CANDIDATES

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Cagayan cops under fire as case vs Chinese drags

TUGUEGARAO CITY – POLICEMEN IN DOÑA Ana town in Cagayan province came under fire due to their supposed poor handling of the killing of a driver allegedly by a Chinese businessman inside the online casino complex of the Cagayan Economic Zone Authority (Ceza) on Feb. 25.

Believing that there was foul play in the shooting, friends and relatives of the victim, Benny Malonzo, an employee of Fuerson H Casino, criticized the alleged "slow" action by the police in filing charges against the suspects.

"The police should not stop at what they were told by Ceza security forces. If there is really an attempt at a whitewash here, there must be an independent investigation of the case," said a government employee, who is Malonzo's friend.

The Ceza Complex in Barangay Centro in Santa Ana has been operating as an online gaming facility through the power given to the agency to operate land-based casinos and other forms of gaming without the need of a permit from the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (Pagcor), the government agency tasked with operating and maintaining gambling parks in the country.

No proper consultation

Residents earlier opposed the operation of the casinos, saying there were conceptualized without proper consultations with local communities.

The criticisms came even as police officials in Santa Ana said they had readied murder charges against the Chinese businessmen and a Filipino security aide.

Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile (former Sen. Franklin Tugaga said (or Antonio Chu), said he is a Metro Manila-based casino agent, and security guard Edgardo Mago were facing criminal charges for Malonzo's death.

Fuerson H Casino is reportedly one of the 10 hotels licensed by Print Cagayan Leisure and Resort Corp. (PCLRC) to operate as an online casino, located with in the Ceza Complex in the coastal town.

Doing a police investigation report, Tugaga said Malonzo's killing was "not accidental," He, however, would not say which companies Chu and Mago worked for.

The victim, Tugaga said, was shot after he tried to justify the suspects as they grappled over a 9-mm pistol following a brawl between two groups of Chinese nationals inside the Ceza Complex at around 10:45 p.m. on Feb. 25.

"We still do not know who between the two suspects actually shot the victim, so we are filing charges against both of them," he said.

Not convinced

The victim's friends in Santa Ana, however, were not convinced.

"We believe that the Chinese suspect was allowed to escape, owing to his vast influence and close connections with high-ranking Ceza officials," said another government source.

But Tugaga dismissed the statement, saying the suspects had left when the police arrived at the crime scene.

"We cannot launch a manhunt because no warrant of arrest has been issued yet," he said.

Mallion Sources, Inc. quarter Ron Shara Jarose

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26 Albay villages lahar 'high-risk' areas–Phivolcs

LEGAZPI CITY—THE HAZARD MAP OF MOUNTAYAbano is expected to change significantly as 26 villages in three towns in Albay have been identified as high risk areas by a team of government geologists and volcanologists.

Alan Baldoz, science research analyst of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) in Bicol, defined high-risk areas as those that face great threat from volcanic hazards such as lahar.

Many of these villages were not high-risk areas until deadliest from the volcano swamped them at the height of Super typhoon "Reming," according to the risk assessment study conducted by the team in December last year.

The four villages declared "high risk" or highly prone to lahar were Penar, Bagong, Bulang and Bigao.

Bantay town in Albay has nine villages identified as high risk: Malabog, Pandan, Buhatan, Bonot, Maslog, Cullat, Libod, Bonga con, Binitinan.

In Guinobatan, the villages of Muratong, Mapaco, Nasisi-an, and Manirok were identified as "high-risk" after it was "affected by deposition" by "Reming."

Muratong and Manirok, which are both right kilometers away from the crater, were only "moderately prone" to lahar before the deadliest on Nov. 30 last year.

In Camalig town, the formerly "moderately prone" villages of Binitan, Itas, Tabaloso, and Quitinitapay were now declared high risk.

High risk villages in Sto. Domingo town were San Isidro, San Antonio, Patol Norte, and Library.

Legazpi City, Daraga, Guinobatan, Camalig and Sto. Domingo towns are all located in the southeast quadrant of Mayon where the crater rim is lowest, making it the pathway or depository of volcanic debris ejected from the crater.

Safety

The high-risk villages should be a no man's land but it would take an "expensive" massive relocation in which if, Baldoz said.

To date, about 3,000 families still live in 38 evacuation centers from a high 30,000 families displaced by "Reming." Some of the evacuees have been moved to transit shelters or tent cities, the Department of Social Welfare and Development reported.

Gov. Fernando Gonzalez said the provincial government had been moving the evacuees in transit centers where they would be temporarily housed while waiting for permanent homes being built in relocation sites by government and non-government institutions.

Gonzalez said his office had been careful in identifying relocation sites to ensure that it was safe and in the best interest of the displaced residents.

The final results of the Phivolcs study by a 18-member team of volcanologists and geologists have not yet been made public.

Baldoz said the study analyzed the mudflow caused by "Reming" and was supposed to reveal changes in the hazard map and other inputs to help disaster officials prepare for future disasters.

With the thick deposit of volcanic debris that remain on Mayon's slopes, Baldoz said the possibility of another lahar flow with the next heavy rains was always there.

Lahar flowed in Albay in 1984, which affected Malinao in this city and Libog in Sto. Domingo.

Another lahar flow occurred in 1981 which affected Malabot in this city.

Last year's lahar, which left over 1,000 people dead or missing, touched in destruction in almost the same extent as what happened in 1814 when Cagsawa town was buried.

All that was left standing was the town's church belfry.

Mayon's alert status has remained at level 3 due to entire glow at night and some volcanic earthquakes emerging from the breathing of rocks and metal of magma in the 2,461-meter volcano, Baldoz said.

Ephraim Agudio, Inquirer Southern Luzon

A BULLDOZER of the Department of Public Works and Highways dredges a river of sand and boulders brought down by Super typhoon "Reming" on Barangay San Raphael, Quinchalon, Albay.

50 volunteers participate in Operation Smile

LAOAG CITY—OPERATION SMILE Philippines has started its 10-day, multi-site international mission in two more cities in the country in line with its 20th year anniversary in November.

"This international mission signals the start of our year-long anniversary celebration," Roberto Ongpauco, Operation Smile Philippines board of trustees, told local reporters.

Ongpauco said close to 50 volunteers, 15 of them international volunteers, were taking part in the mission in Ilocos Norte alone.

At the Ilocos Medical Center (IMC), where the mission for cleft palates was to be conducted, at least 400 persons lined up to be screened.

Dr. Michelle Ajero-Isidoro, one of the volunteer anesthesiologists, said patients were coming in from as far as Mulanguin in Sarangani Province, Cotabato Valley, and Magsaysay in Davao del Sur.

"In Davao City alone, the mission has treated 2,694 children for the past 11 years. We are hoping to treat more than 600 children in the next few days including those in the cities of Naga, Cebu and Bacolod," he said.

Ongpauco said Operation Smile, the world's largest private organization, had saved more than 18,000 children since 1982.

"Operation Smile Philippines hopes to do 22 missions and we hope to raise 2,000 to 2,500 children with deformities for this year," he said.

Ongpauco said their group "is not all about surgery (alone)."

He said it also provided complete health care services for children and adults with physical deformities.

Analie dE. Baldillo, Inquirer Mindanao

Manila Water Service Upgrade in MAKATI CITY

Manila Water will conduct service improvement project in MAKATI CITY which will cause temporary water supply interruption.

Schedule: 10:00 p.m., Tuesday, March 6 to 6:00 a.m. Wednesday, March 7, 2007

Areas Affected:
- East Rembo
- Comembo
- 21st Street
- Pembo

Activity: Upgrading of Port Bon Pump Station (Installation of 150mm &FV & 150 x 600 tee for suction inlet)

We therefore advise all affected residents to store enough water for their needs during the interruption.

For updates, please call our Customer Service Hotline at 1627.

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AFPSLAI Grants P100 M Loan Rebates

The Armed Forces and Police Savings and Loan Association, Inc. (AFPSLAI), as a non-stock savings and loan association, has always stood ground in its objective of relieving member-borrowers the burden of repayment. This is the reason why for the past years, AFPSLAI has been giving loan rebates and reduction in interest rates.

It has always been AFPSLAI's commitment to give back to its loyal members their fare share of the earnings after satisfying all its obligations at the end of the calendar year. This is good news for all members who have maintained good credit standing with the Association because AFPSLAI has released P100 M worth of salary loan rebates to qualified borrowers starting February 13, 2007.

Member-borrowers whose loan and interest payments are regular and updated during the past year are entitled to receive rebates. Members who have lapses in payment or understated remittances may also be considered for rebates provided that the total amount of lapses/underremittances as of year-end shall not exceed the amount equivalent to one (1) monthly amortization. Borrowers with past due accounts settled within the year shall also be considered.

Loan rebates will be credited to the borrower's CCA or savings account, except for retiring members with outstanding loan balances at the time of the granting of loan rebates. Instead, the amount shall be automatically credited to their respective loan accounts to avoid payment to those who still have liabilities with the Association.

TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT

Mayor Jessie B. Castillo
Bacoor, Cavite

What if you have a high ranking politician campaigning for his candidate telling everybody that the PNP and COMELEC "atin yan di' tayo papatalo"?

What if you see this politician roaming around town with his dozens of heavily armed bodyguards presumably with no COMELEC exemptions at all and offering money and projects to entice supporters?

What if they use PNP personnel in recruiting Barangay Captains with ready cash offers?

What if you see a blatant display of use of public funds from national government and its agencies such as the PCSO for campaign?

What if you are receiving gifts such as bullet or telephone calls or text messages of death threats to you and your family?

What if your wife while on her way home, you will overhear thru a civilian PNP radio "andyan na si mayora, ambushin na yan"?

What if some PNP officers are always in association with this high ranking elected official promising them legislative influence in the pursuit of their careers?

What if you see all these previously assigned PNP personnel in your area which you have requested to be re-assigned or whose assignment was refused here are now being mobilized and perhaps planning to be reinstated now in this very crucial time?

What will you do and how will you react most especially when the lives of your family are at stake?

In this election period, tension are high and every move is contemplated to be politically motivated, thus, the need for more open discussion with the authorities such as the DILG, PNP and COMELEC. There is a need to clarify all gray areas of the law relative to this election period, in ORDER TO COME UP WITH A FREE AND HONEST ELECTION.

The crisis that transpired in Bacoor was based on the calculated plan and course of action which resulted from the aforementioned factual circumstances and on the following, to wit:

1.- THERE SHOULD BE NO REPETITION ON WHAT HAPPENED IN THE 2001 ELECTIONS.

1.1.- Two weeks before the 2001 elections, the local police force were shuffled and a new Chief of Police was installed under the guise of an Officer-in-Charge, this was made with no clearance from the COMELEC as mandatorily requirement under the law as well as the necessity that the local chief executive has the prerogative to choose from among the three (3) nominees for the chief of police;

1.2.- That in 2001, four (4) Armored Personnel Carriers (APC) were seen roaming the municipality and in fact some were stationed in the municipal hall and public elementary schools;

1.3.- The employment of discharged PNP men from the WPD, housed in Lotus Motel in Bacoor who conducted visitations on houses of civilians and attempting to hold and delay the delivery of ballot boxes for canvass;

1.4.- That during the campaign period all civilians who attended our meetings and rallies were subjected to checkpoints;

I am trying to exhaust all legal remedies available but the "do and implement now" while you howl protest leaves you no ground but to do something to be heard.

- As per provisions of the law, specifically the Local Government Code, the minimum requirements for the LGU's is simply to provide a site where national agencies of the National Government may hold office. In Bacoor, we provided the PNP not only seven (7) stations for its offices but also municipal vehicles, motorcycles and even gasoline allowance and other supplies and equipments which is more than the minimum requirement of the law. These were not donated to the PNP but simply given for its temporary use, thus there are Memorandum Receipts for every properties provided to it. OWNERSHIP OVER THESE PROPERTIES REMAINED TO THE MUNICIPALITY OF BACOOR.

- I informed the DILG and the PNP hierarchy of the dilemma but got no reply. I even informed them that I will block any attempt to shuffle the Bacoor PNP which is not in accordance with the law, but instead I got a message that they will force their entry should I prevent their ingress to the building. Thus I asserted my authority by closing only one (1) of the seven (7) stations, about six o'clock in the evening of February 7, 2007, but we prepared for any untoward incidents that may arise should criminals and dissidents take advantage of the situation.

- Together with some members of the Sangguniang Bayan and then Acting Governor of Cavite, Jonvic Remulla we stayed in the police station, and in fact we together with all PNP personnel present were in a jovial mood and ready at all time against opportunistic elements. FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE PUBLIC ALL THE OTHER SIX (6) PNP STATIONS IN BACOOR WERE OPEN AND ARE FUNCTIONING.

- Media people came in and statements were made, meeting with the PNP Regional Director was scheduled ten o'clock in the morning of February 8, 2007, ALAS, we were heard.

- In a meeting the next day, Director Salumbides of the DILG also arrived reportedly upon instructions of the NAPOLCOM for the purpose of conducting an investigation. During the brief talk, he was able to hear portions of a recorded statement of a high ranking politician, "KANYA NAANG PNP", and upon hearing the same Dir. Salumbides said that the same was devastating.

- Present in the 10:30 am meeting were, Regional Director of the PNP, Gen. Radovan, Provincial Director Posadas and Gov. Jonvic Remulla, herein, we discussed all the issues at hand and I agreed to return the use of the building as well as all the vehicles and equipments back to the PNP on the pretext that they will adhere to all the provisions of the law relative to the movement of PNP personnel in Bacoor. Immediately after our meeting the padlocked building and all the vehicles were made available for the use of the PNP.

- THEREAFTER, WE BOTH MADE AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT TO THE MEDIA THAT EVERYTHING IS BACK TO NORMAL. But later in the evening of February 8, 2007, we received a resolution from the NAPOLCOM WITHDRAWING OUR DEPUTATION OVER THE LOCAL POLICE IN OUR MUNICIPALITY without again hearing our side, in gross violation of our fundamental right to due process enshrined and guaranteed by no less than the Constitution.

I did not do these for personal interest nor to defend my chief of police or the PNP men of Bacoor but this were dictated by the principle that WE SHOULD ALL ADHERE TO THE LAW on the movement of PNP personnel during election period without COMELEC clearance which is oftentimes violated and abused in the guise of designation of an OFFICER-IN-CHARGE. All we want is to BE HEARD.

What I did was simply to invoke our power under the law as CUSTODIAN of all municipal properties including the all buildings owned by the municipality.

NOW, I thought I will be heard, but instead, our police deputation was revoked, thus, the more they can do anything they want in the assignment of PNP personnel, defeating the principle of civilian rule over the police/military.

Currently, our supporters are all getting text messages from some PNP personnel that they NOW control Bacoor and that they should now join them with their candidate.

I NOW SEEK THE HELP OF THE PEOPLE AND ALL THE CHIEF EXECUTIVES OF ALL THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS OF THE COUNTRY TO UNDERSTAND MY SITUATION BEFORE JUDGING MY ACT.

FOR THE RECORD, FROM NOW ON, IF THERE IS ANYTHING THAT HAPPENS TO ME AND MY FAMILY AND EVEN MY SUPPORTERS, I SHALL HOLD THEM RESPONSIBLE.

. . . . . AND TO THE COMELEC, there can never be a FREE and HONEST ELECTION in Bacoor under these circumstances. Thus, we seek your help to put us among the areas of concern of your office and provide us support from the elite group of the Philippine Marines in order to make the May 14, 2007 elections CREDIBLE AND PEACEFUL.

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

10 commandments for responsible candidacy

THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES WERE RELEASED YESTERDAY BY the Church-based Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting:

1. Run for public office because you want to serve the people and have the competence for the position you are running for.
2. Obey all laws of the Comelec.
3. Campaign on issues, platforms and programs of government that will address the needs of the people.
4. Do not promise anything you cannot keep.
5. Do not attack the honor and dignity of your opponent.
6. Do not buy votes.
7. Do not use any form of vulgarities.
8. Do not cheat in the counting of votes.
9. Accept defeat with dignity and be noble in victory.
10. Resort to God from the depth of your soul that once in power you will serve with utmost dedication and put the good of the country above all else.

… for responsible voting

1. Vote according to the dictates of your conscience.
2. Respect the decision of others in choosing their candidates.
3. Seek to know the moral integrity, capabilities and other personal qualities of the candidates you will vote for.
4. Strive to understand the issues, platform and programs of candidates and parties seeking your votes.
5. Decent will your vote.
6. Do not vote for candidates using guns, goons and gold.
7. Do not vote for candidates with records of graft and corruption, and human rights violation.
8. Do not vote for candidates just because of "kulang na loot" (debt of gratitude), "personal appearance," popularity or publicized (unscientific).
9. Do not vote for candidates living an immoral life.
10. Pay the ordinary citizens the money above all due to cleaning the candidate you will vote for.

Mayors push for Vilma

From page A1

no longer run for governor to give way to her brother-in-law, outgoing Vice Gov. Ricky Recto, who is bent on running against reelectionist Gov. Armando Sanchez.

She was apparently trying to calm tensions created by rival gubernatorial ambitions within the family.

The matter of who would run between Santos and Ricky Recto for the post of governor has highlighted the rivalry between the vice governor and his youngest brother, Sen. Ralph Recto, who had predicted that his wife would handily beat Sanchez.

Political dynasties

The issue has also thrown into focus the problem of political dynasties in the country. The problem has endured despite a ban on it in the Constitution because of the absence of a law implementing such a ban.

Citing surveys pointing to a Santos victory over Sanchez, the church official said that opposed to be the predominant sentiment of the people in the province.

"It's no secret here that only Vilma can beat the incumbent governor," he told the Inquirer yesterday.

Clergy also roaring

He noted that surveys had suggested that put together, the votes for Ricky Recto, Sanchez and Bonny Tanseco, another possible candidate, would be no match to those for Santos for governor.

Among the clergy in Batangas, many were also quietly rooting for the actress supposedly because of her "clean" record in public office, according to the church official.

"For the good of Batangas, listen to God's children and just allow the stars to fall on our side here the governor," said the official.

In a press conference more than two months ago, Ricky Recto admitted that Santos had better chances of winning against Sanchez. But he insisted that he would make a better governor.

Malacañang watching

"I will admit that she's a better candidate in terms of winnability. But in terms of governance …

ta B

BATANGAS Vice Gov. Ricky Recto, who has declared he will run for governor of the province against incumbent Gov. Armando Sanchez, shakes hands with supporters during an opposition rally in Batangas City.

I'm from vice governor for 12 years. I know the ins and outs of the four corners of Batangas," he told reporters.

Ricky Recto suggested that Santos instead run for Congress and represent the fourth district of Batangas.

Malacañang has kept its hands off the family row, at least on the surface.

Last week, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, who is from Batangas, declined to be drawn into the fray, saying: "I have no comment on the political permutations" in the province.

Ermita denied Ricky Recto's allegations that he was backing Sanchez' candidacy, saying, "I'm just minding his development."

MAYNILAD MANAGEMENT AND RANK-AND-FILE UNION REACH QUICK AGREEMENT A new Collective Bargaining Agreement between Maynilad Water Services Inc. and its rank-and-file union, Maynilad Water and Sewerage Union-PTGWO, were quickly reached and signed last March 2, 2007, in a development that reflected the support and trust of the 1,700-strong union for the new management of Maynilad, the DMCI-MPIC consortium. Shown all smiles after the signing of the CBA are Maynilad president Florello Eduar (third from left) shaking hands with MWSU president Lucia Magno; (from extreme left) Labor undersecretary Romeo Lagman; Maynilad directors Jose Ma. Lim (MPIC president) and Isidro Consunji (DMCI Holdings president); and PTGWO national president and SSS commissioner Victor Batas. Among the benefits in the CBA are: a pay increase of P1,850 starting January 1, 2007, another pay increase of P1,950 starting January 1, 2008, a P5,000 signing bonus, and additional P100 rice and meal allowance per month for the next two years; an additional P2,000 in their Dependents' Hospitalization Subsidy, an increase of P1,000 in the Mid-Year Financial Assistance for year 2007 and another P1,000 for year 2008, and the payment of residual benefits.

Business groups …

From page A1

than the fixation some of a luxury hotel.

"Our main concern is to prevent a repeat of the last three years where Congress was distracted from its main duty of legislation by numerous investigations. We want to see who among the candidates are serious in pushing for the national interest when they are voted into office," Chua said.

In a statement, Sen. Ahmad Ismae II said he welcomed the move of the Commission on Elections and the business community to organize public debates to raise the level of political discourse during the campaign.

Public forum

Bacua, chair of the Senate committees on economic affairs and banks, financial institutions, said the nominal candidates needed a well-publicized responsible public forum to air their views on a broad range of issues, specifically the proposals to implement a second wave of tax reforms, the ratification of the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement, and amendments to the Labor Code.

Bacua said a key concern of the public was the future of the Arroyo administration, as declared by Finance Secretary Margarita Teves, to implement new tax measures to sustain the country's fiscal consensus.

"The public deserves to know the candidates' stand on how to sustain fiscal reforms and whether they support the idea of new tax legislation, including a recurring proposal to tax text messages," Bacua added.

Cudeiro, Mahoge also support the debate, saying that will give the electorate a chance to get to know who they would be voting for.

"What is important is for the political parties to reveal and explain their respective platforms of government," said Isidro Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, also president of the influential Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines.

The debate was spoiled by a challenge hurled by Presidential Chief of Staff Jerry Salcedo at the opposition to a public discussion on the economic performance of the Arroyo administration after GO cannot not with public advocacy groups in several newspapers claiming the economy was in worse shape than during the term of deposed President Joseph Estrada.

The ad, titled "Is the People Way Better: The Real Score on 1000s Economic Performance or Why the Nation is Worse off than in January 2001," said that the economic gains under the Arroyo administration did not reach the majority of Filipinos.

The opposition initially accepted Salcedo's challenge but wanted the debate held at the Plaza Miranda to enable more people to watch and hear the candidates.

But Team Unity spokesperson Joseph "Erap" Ejercito said that GO could not claim that the debate would be unacceptable because it would be fully covered by television, radio and newspapers.

Team Unity standard-bearer Senate President Manuel Villar Jr. said the debate was "a good idea" but he was not sure if it would push through.

Senatorial candidate Michael Defensor said the preference for Plaza Miranda was just a ploy to prevent him from having to cover up for GO's shortcomings as head of the administration and just wait if anything stuck.

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Erap flays Team Unity 'spin masters'

By Jocelyn R. Uy
and Norman Bordadora

IF THE OPPOSITION appears to be off to a lethargic start, it's all the administration fault, Erap stated.

Former President Joseph Estrada, speaking by telephone from Tanay, Rizal, where he was undergoing physical therapy, Estrada said yesterday that the perception that GO had a "weak organization" was a result of work done by administration "spin masters."

Estrada said the campaigning had just begun, and it was understandable the opposition would encounter some "hitches" in its campaign activities.

The opposition had to cancel two rallies on Roxas Island follow-

ing "threats" that could put people's lives at risk. But the scheduled Team Unity and GO senatorial bets are slowly getting grassroots support.

"That's what they say," said Estrada. "Everywhere they (opposition candidates) go, they are widely accepted by the public," Estrada told the reporters.

However, Estrada said that his being locked up in Tanay was one of the opposition's disadvantages.

In a statement submitted to the court opposing Estrada's plea to be considered as his witnesses in two Joint, Special Prosecutor Dennis "Cito" Ejercito said that Estrada did not have to personally engage his candidates' opponents in a debate.

"The candidates of his party should not depend or ride on his popularity but on their own competence, qualifications and popularity," Ejercito said.

Senatorial bet Ping Lacson's son, San Juan Mayor Joseph Victor "JV" Ejercito, said GO would hold fewer rallies but make more radio and television appearances. He made the announcement in the wake of the recorded rallies in Western Visayas last week.

"I've always said that it was a media war. From the start we already knew that. It was the locals who wanted the rallies," said Ejercito, who will turn over his post as chief campaign manager to outgoing Sen. Sergio Osmeña III.

Ejercito had earlier said he would organize "townhall" meetings with sectoral and community leaders to hear complaints and

GO readies experts team to counter poll cheating

By Dona Pazzibugan

LEARNING FROM THE "BITTER Gate" scandal that marred the 2004 election, the Genuine Opposition is putting up a "quasi-judicial" team of legal experts and poll practitioners to counter any cheating in the May 14 senatorial elections.

Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, a leader of the GO coalition, said most of the opposition funds and efforts were intended to bolster their anti-election fraud team.

"The priority of our expenses will go to anti-cheating," he said.

"Our antifraud committee will be a powerhouse team," GO campaign spokesperson Adel Tamano told the reporters recently.

He said the team would include top officials of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, election officials and other legal experts.

Binay said the coalition's significance would be a big help in preventing cheating.

He said candidates would also be barred from having copies of the election returns posted in public places.

"There are a lot of people with cell phones, so anyone with a cell phone can transmit that," he said. "That is how we'll cope with the lack of funding."

ABS-CBN: More money by 'simple arithmetic'

To next page A-2

dan would spend the average amount of P50 million, the total would be P500 million with just 10 candidates," Dinok said.

Under the Fair Election Act of 2001, an independent senatorial candidate and a political party can spend P3 for each registered voter. A senatorial candidate on the ticket of a political party can draft over P3 for every voter.

Dinoy said that there were 43,817,595 registered voters as of last month, a senatorial candidate affiliated with a party can spend P131.45 million for his or her campaign. An independent senatorial candidate can spend as much as P131.35 million.

KBP appeal

Osorio said it was too early in the game to project earnings from political ads. The 90-day campaign period has created an unusual channel logjam on Feb. 12.

"It's pretty difficult in some cases with a perpetual or indicative figure, especially since there is still an appeal from the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas (KBP) to suspend the Commission on Elections rule limiting political advertisements on TV and radio," Osorio said.

He pointed out that the KBP had asked the Comelec to reset back to the 2004 ruling.

In 2004, the rule was that each candidate would be allowed 120 minutes per TV and 180 minutes per radio station. This year, a maximum of candidate is allowed only 120 minutes of campaign ads to be divided among all TV stations, and another 180 minutes for all radio stations.

This was confirmed by KBP chair Ani Medina, who said that the group had sought a dialogue with Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos.

Medina said the KBP was advised to draft a position paper on the issue.

"We've sent these letters so that We've been informed that our request is now being studied by the Comelec's legal affairs department," he said.

The KBP expects the Comelec to come out with its decision this week.

Two options

Medina said at least two options were being considered.

"Instead of an aggregate limit, the cap will be imposed in terms of 'per candidate and per broadcast area' or 'per candidate and per region.' According to KBP rules, Mega Manila (Metro Manila and suburbs) is a broadcast area, Baras Baras is another broadcast area, Bicol is another broadcast area," he said.

Osorio said the rationale behind the KBP appeal was not only to clamp up a television's coverage.

"The perspective here is to even the field elections. To allow the candidates to inform the public about their credentials and platforms. The current Comelec ruling limits the public's opportunity to make a more informed decision," he said.

Osorio said that even non-KBP members would benefit from the appeal because it would apply to all TV networks, not just KBP members. GMA 7 is not a KBP member.

Considerably higher

Although Osorio acknowledged that the campaign period could spell huge earnings for TV networks, the total figure would still depend on other factors, apart from the Comelec ruling.

"If the KBP appeal is granted, the projected income from campaign ads could become considerably higher. But then again, we can't really predict how the candidates would allocate their campaign funds and divide their 120 minutes," he said.

Before joining MD-CBN, Dinoko was president of Capol, the advertising and PR affiliate of the advertising company Campaigns and Grey.

33-percent discount

Although ABS-CBN hesitated to provide projected earnings from political ads, the network's Corporate Communications office did not rule out a cutoff for rate card for political ads.

"Political ads are discounted 20 percent (compared to regular ads)," Osorio said.

The regular rate for prime time shown is P161,133 for a 30-second ad.

For prime time shows like the slightly more show "It's Showtime" and variety programs like "Wowowee" and "Maalala Mo Kaya," political ads cost P183,299 per 30 seconds. Or roughly P6,000 per second.

For weekend noontime shows "E.A.T. SP," the rate is P119,877 each for the 30-second ads. For talk show, "The Buzz," P149,434.

For AM88, ABS-CBN's AM radio station, ad rates for political ads range from P13,910 to P17,500 per 30 seconds.

For dzRH, ABS-CBN's FM radio station, political ads rates range from P2,490 to P10,000 per 30 seconds.

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GMA network to earn P500M from candidates

To next page A-2

than the other networks, and this is working in our favor," Gozon said.

"So candidates, who have a limited time to get their message across, prefer to place their ads in higher rating shows for greater impact. This is certainly working in our favor," he said.

ERIN 7 has a 71 percent share of non-cable households in Mega Manila, even if GMA continues to enjoy a bigger audience share in the provinces.

Bulk of ad spending

Irish Noyola, the network's vice president for sales, said the P500 million in projected sales from political ads represented the bulk of total ad spend for the whole campaign period of 13 weeks for senatorial candidates.

"The phenomenon now is that most of those ads are placed through multinational advertising agencies, as the buying trend is scientific, aiming the client's maximum reach for their advertising," she said.

The Fair Elections Act, or Republic Act No. 9006, sets the guidelines for the use of broadcast and print advertising by the candidates.

120 minutes for TV ads

Under the act, senatorial candidates are allowed a maximum of 120 minutes of TV ads and 180 minutes of radio ads.

An independent senatorial candidate and a political party can spend P3 for each registered voter. A senatorial candidate on the slate of a political party can shell out P3 for every voter.

As of this year, the Commission on Elections counted 43,817,595 registered voters. So a senatorial candidate affiliated with a party can spend P131.45 million for his or her campaign while an independent senatorial candidate can shell out as much as P131.89 million.

Standardized ad rates

Advertising rates have also been standardized by the Comelec.

Ad rates used for political ads for TV have been pegged at 30 percent lower than the ad rates of a year ago, and 20 percent lower for radio, according to Noyola.

A 30-second TV ad may run like over GMA 7 as well as in its broadcast arm, Barangay LS 97.1, Studio 23 and RPN 9, all affiliates of the advertising company Campaigns and Grey.

33-percent discount

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NISSAN

SPORTS

Barako, Tigers spank foes

[illegible]

By Phoong R. Castillo

JAMES PENNY HAD A LOT OF INTERESTED onlookers wearing 23 points to lead defending champion Red Bull to a 99-89 decision of Purefoods last night in the Talk 'N Text Fiesta Cup at the Cuneta Astrodome.

Penny scored 13 in the second period while also flashing with 12 rebounds, four assists, two steals and four blocks in a brilliant all-around seven-man effort.

"He played as expected," coach Ong Cuison said. "I'm hoping to get him in this consistency."

Cyrus Baguio added 17 points and Ansky Sabellano 15 for the Barako, while James Yap, despite troubles in his mornings, scattered 28 points to pace the Giants, the runners-up here last year.

Purefoods import Jesse Sting finished with 24 markers, but was hobbled in the second half because of bad ankles.

Anthony Johnson scored 25 points and Alex Asi got added 18 in the curtain-raiser to lead Coca-Cola to an 81-79 victory over Welcoat.

The road champagnes avoided Toyota in the final period after the Tigers had lost an 18-point first half lead as Coca-Cola got its campaign here off to the right foot.

"This game is an indication that nothing will come easy for us," Coca-Cola coach Bobby Resultay said. "Just when we thought that we had control, here comes Welcoat making life hard for us."

A seasoned overseas campaigner with stints in Chile, Poland and Mexico, Johnson actually went scoreless in the third after tossing 27 in the first half, almost down memorable by early look.

And that man reborn, the Tarpons, that league newcomers who finished dead-last in the Philippine Cup, opened fire, were leading, 65-61, after a Jay-R Reyes layup with 6:22 left.

Reyes led the Dragons with 23 points, just one shy of his career high. He also had seven rebounds. Johnson buckled down to work and saved the day for the Tigers, who are playing for the first time in two years outside of the San Miguel Corp. umbrella.

CHARLES Clark, Welcoat's leaky import, tries to take it strong to the hoop against the Coca-Cola frontline duo of Ali Peek (left) and Anthony Johnson (right).

The scores:

First Game

COCA-COLA 89—Johnson 25, Dojo 13, Peek 11, Intrinsic 8, Arevalo 3, Mhotan 2, Mendoza 2, Valencia 2.

WELCOAT 79—Evans 25, Clark 15, Lores 10, Compton 7, Dublin 5, Ramirez 5, Salvani 5, De Mesa 2, Manuel 2

Quarters: 23-8, 40-35, 61-61, 81-79

Second Game

RED BULL 99—Penny 23, Baguio 17, Sabellano 15, Cruz 12, Dionisio 8, Asilum 7, Custodio 6, Villanueva 6, Flores 2, Alvarez 2, Mendoza 0, Bajarias 0, Reyes 0.

PUREGOODS 89—Sting 24, King 14, Salvador 13, Evangelista 11, Castillo 5, Simon 4, Yap Jr. 4, Ilaya 4, Amyot 3, Jumbrina 2

Quarters: 19-17, 47-43, 71-61, 99-89

More stories on A29 to 32

Knowledge is Power

PLDT Enables Heavyweights in the KPO Industry

"Clearly, the offshoring industry is just beginning to push, as specific industries are proving to be areas of strength for the Philippines on the global outsourcing map," said PLDT SVP and Head of the Corporate Business Group Eric M. Alberto at the E-Services Philippines 7th Global Sourcing Conference and Exhibition. Mr. Alberto was one of the executive panelists at a discussion led by SAMCOM President Kiran Karnik, titled The Next Level: Knowledge Process Outsourcing.

"What makes the industry more exciting is its dynamism," Mr. Alberto added. "From plain BPO operations, the Philippines is clearly becoming a competitive player and embracing more value-added KPO opportunities."

The shift to the demand from BPO to KPO was the hot topic at this year's conference and exhibition, as outsourcing top guns showcased their services to foreign investors. For the past 6 years, E-Services Philippines has effectively promoted the country as the obvious global "outsource investor" for IT-enabled services, generating around US $23.5 billion in new contracts just last year.

"Ever since the infancy stages of the call center industry, PLDT has always been there," says Narciso S. Ramos, PLDT SVP and Head of Corporate Business Solutions. "Knowledge Process Outsourcing is really the deeper side of the business—not simply outsourcing agents but also analysts—providing conclusions and results, especially on the IT side. Analytics and high-end knowledge activities certainly offer better job satisfaction and handsome profits over process-oriented jobs. And as the industry moves to the next level, PLDT will always be there, not just in terms of infrastructure, but also as the KPO industry's expert partner in all its ICT solution requirements."

While the Philippines continues to hold its own as a darling of the BPO industry, companies are keen to move one step up the value chain by serving global media markets. These days, back-end processing and customer support are taking a backseat to KPO, the next wave in the offshoring industry. Parallel to a shift in the demands of the global outsourcing market, local companies now have to adjust to offer more than mere technical and support services.

Telco leader PLDT is ready to equip the Philippines with the telecommunications to become a global player. In fact, two of the company's products, PLDT Direct Stock OnPlugged (DSOP), a wireless networking solution, and PLDT FAST-Track, a field asset tracking system, won awards in this year's IT-Enabled Category for "Most Innovative Product of the Year" and "Most Creative Application Service of the Year", respectively. PLDT DSOP enables businesses with the technology to perform wireless transactions over a secure, virtual private network (VPN). PLDT FAST-Track is an application-based business solution that allows companies to wirelessly monitor the whereabouts of their mobile assets (simultaneously) and in real time. These are only part of the wide range of robust business solutions that PLDT has empowered many companies with. Since the BPO boom in the Philippines, PLDT has provided reliable business solutions and ICT infrastructures to outsourcing firms and will continue to do so as these companies make the shift to KPO.

The Board of Investments estimates that the Philippine BPO sector's revenues will grow 37% this year to US $4.09 billion from last year's estimated US $2.63 billion. By 2010, the BPO sector is slated to become a US $12.2 billion industry. Now that more outsourcing companies in the Philippines are stepping up to meet increasing KPO demands, the requirement for enabling infrastructure is more crucial than ever.

"Everything's coming together really well," says Eric B. Alberto. "The public and private sectors of the country are in this together and there are clear paths for the Philippines to become a formidable player in the call center, BPO and the higher-value KPO industry. As we strive to make the Philippines the preferred destination for BPO and KPO companies, we should equip our workers and managers with the ability to think and analyze rather than just accomplish tasks. It's time to focus and bring our infrastructure and resources to even more competitive levels, so we can attain sustainable growth in the industry."

Senator Manuel Roxas shakes hands with PLDT SVP & Head of Corporate Business Group Eric Alberto at a panelists during the E-services CEO Forum on KPO.

Senator Manuel Roxas visits the award-winning DSOP technology on a wireless device.

PLDT First Vice President Corporate Business Solutions Group Narciso Ramos receiving the award on Most Innovative Product of the Year

PLDT DSOP Most Innovative Product of the Year Receiving the award are Antonio Campos, PLDT DSOP Product Manager, and Ronnie Ruiz, PLDT Corporate Sales Business Head

L-R: Jay Lagdameo and Percy Rodriguez, PLDT Corporate Sales Business Heads, demonstrate PLDT DSOP to Secretary Rose Vivo, Manuel Roxas, Eric Alberto, PLDT SVP & Head of Corporate Business Group, Monico Jacinto, PLDT EVP & Head of Corporate Business Solutions Group, and Narciso Ramos, PLDT SVP & Head of Corporate Business Solutions Group

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Editor Ester G. Diposcupil

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Ombudsman rules against Peewee Trinidad

Petition seeking to reverse order for his dismissal nixed

By DJ Yap

THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN has junked the plea of dismissed Pasay City Mayor Wenceslao "Peewee" Trinidad seeking the reversal of its Jan. 12 resolution ordering his ouster from office.

In a resolution dated Feb. 23, Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez also cleared charges that Trinidad and nine other city officials—Vice Mayor Antonino Calixto and eight councilors—were not accorded due process when the ordered their suspension over their approval of an allegedly anomalous garbage disposal contract.

According to Gutierrez, the rules and decisions laid down by the Supreme Court gives her office the power to suspend and dismiss officials found culpable for misfeasance.

No abuse of authority

The 34-page resolution also gave no weight to allegations by Trinidad that the Ombudsman exceeded its authority by immediately suspending him and the other officials.

Trinidad, Calixto and 10 city councilors were charged last year with approving a multimillion peso garbage contract without conducting a public bidding.

The Ombudsman suspended them for six months and, in January, dismissed them from government service, except for two councilors who were granted immunity in exchange for testifying against the accused officials.

Respondents were given a chance

Gutierrez said her office could not be accused of "evident bias" since all the parties had submitted their position papers, and the respondents had the chance to refute allegations the evidence presented.

The Ombudsman also denied Trinidad's plea to recall the immunity granted to the witnesses in the garbage contract case.

He said her office had sifted through affidavit records and minutes of meetings of the Pasay City Council to determine that there was conspiracy that led to the renegotiation of the garbage contract without a public bidding.

Solicitor General files motion

Meanwhile, the Office of the Solicitor General has asked the Court of Appeals to nullify, then its order temporarily stopping the implementation of Calixto's dismissal from government service.

The OSG questioned the grant of the temporary restraining order, saying the motion for reconsideration filed by Calixto had already been denied by the Ombudsman.

It said the petition for a TRO was not applicable to the remedy of appeal, invoked available and final. A petition for review, prohibition and TRO could not be filed.

Since the TRO is in issued, Calixto has gone twice to City Hall to no attempt to regain his post and assume the position of acting mayor. His attempts, however, have been rebuffed by the Department of the Interior and Local Government and the Pasay police which declared the entry on both occasions.

DID YOU KNOW

CAVALRY: Famous Street in Quiapo, Manila used to be known as Calle Echague. (The Palmer Echague, governor general of the Philippines from 1902 to 1905).

Calixto Palacios was the first Filipino crowned by the Philippines. He was born The Quiapo Senior Dimson 1844, and died in Manila in 1907. A prodigious literary talent was also named after him.

Cyril C. Bendaña, Inquirer Research

THERE ARE A LOT OF ILLEGAL POWER USERS! Many of our area, resulting in many incidents of power interruptions; in some cases, the brownouts last up to six days. Why, Meralco?

—ERICK CUEVAS, 27, Barangay Holy Spirit, Quezon City

If you happen to pass by Nueva and Pasay Avenues in Quezon City, the roads have an unmarked level like Metropolitan Manila but widened! Aside by officers and locals! Sometimes, there seems to be no attempt to fix the roads that have been in such a bad state and since last year's Typhoon "Milenyo." Can you believe in the entire concerned agency line-ups and not problem? Thank you.

—APPLE PEREZ, 40, Pasay Avenue, Quezon City

There is a no name "street" Leong Subdivision (Bray Angel) here in Pasay, can anybody name the Barangay Commissioner in Barangay Dampalan, Calling Quezon City officials. Please catch these illegals and confiscate all tables.

—YVETTE CORSATTE, 42, San Francisco del Monte, Quezon City

THE LADY OF WHITE CROSS

Orphanage marks founder's 100th year

By Mike L. Morales

"I HAD A VISION" A BOY OF ABOUT 11 YEARS old called out when he caught sight of a nun in the city.

The boy, one of several children waiting at White Cross, an orphanage on Ascolan Street in San Juan, was in the playground with other kids.

Another group, upon hearing his greeting, immediately dropped their toys while others got off their mini bicycles or rocking horses and ran to the gate.

Within seconds, the nun was bombarded with more greetings, as well as smiles and a hand waver from other kids.

"That's why you can never stop helping them. You might lose your voice if you go on saying NO," a caregiver at the orphanage told a child who was screaming.

The children resumed playing. Every now and then, some of them who are playing tag would dutifully run to the caregivers, clutched onto them to make sure no one got hurt.

But social workers, looking after the kids at White Cross, one of the oldest child care institutions in the country, can be quite exhausting, too. On March 6, the orphanage will mark the centennial birthday of its founder, Victoria Lopez de Araneta. A market commemorating the event will be unveiled by the Rotaract Historical Institute in the institution on that day.

White plague

Established in 1936, the orphanage originally housed children of tuberculosis (TB) patients who were confined at Quezon Institute in E. Rodriguez Avenue in Quezon City. At that time, the disease spread like wildfire among the population and killed hundreds of people. A cure had yet to be discovered then for TB which was also known as the white plague.

The newly-opened orphanage was known by its name in Spanish as CASA BLANCA which was the prevalent language of the elite in the 1930s. It was also known as Quezon Preventorium, after one of its patrons, President Manuel Quezon.

With its owners at the helm, the board bought a four-hectare lot in Sandiman, San Juan to build the orphanage on. The building was designed by Pablo Antonio who was later named National Artist for Architecture.

In 1938, the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul took over the management and opened its doors to an initial batch of 20 children of TB patients.

Generous donations from socialites and government officials got the orphanage running, through the countless charity dances and fund-raisers sponsored by the mothers portrayed.

Socialite Josephine Lim Araneta-Rodriguez: "My mother had this knack of getting all kinds of people involved in her charity work—from powerful people in government, including Presidents Quezon, Manuel Roxas, Elpidio Quirino and Ramon Magsaysay—to actors, boxers, entrepreneurs, even salesmen. The social gatherings involved cost to other potential donors to keep White Cross afloat."

Lasting subsidy

Quezon, for one, signed a bill giving the institution a stamp from boxer-cum-investment-supported by her cofounder Dr. Pedro J. Fernandez, Dr. Amado Inciong and Commissioner H. Ty. No. 363 which gave the orphanage the subsidy that it continues to receive up to this day.

At the outbreak of World War II, the nuns moved their wards to Baliwasche in nearby Mandaluyong when the Japanese assumed control of the orphanage. When the war ended in 1946, the residents of White Cross returned with the help of American liberation forces.

Today, the orphanage looks after 115 children aged 6 and below, 79 of whom are boys. Aside from preparing the children for adoption, it also serves as a temporary home for the kids of poor, working and single parents.

Caregivers say their wards can be quite a handful.

"One time, as they were down stairs to practice for a presentation, the boys saw a white cat and chased it," Pauline, a social worker, told the reporter.

When they finally captured the animal, they played with it. Pauline then allowed it to be killed off as an act of a cat, "so that he, the cat children after all," these teacher said.

Dr. Esmeralda Ribelo or Dodo Lanuza, R.C., one of the longest-serving nuns in White Cross, said that in the 1960s, there were about 300 children at the orphanage. The Daughters of Charity run the orphanage until 2004. Today it is managed by the White Cross board of directors.

"The record I was handling then had 79 children and all their kins. I was one of the youngest nuns there," Ribelo said. She was assigned to White Cross when she was 25. The nun, who is now 78, lives in Iloilo to attend the March 6 event.

Apart from Ribelo's, there were only six other nuns who were assigned at the orphanage. Because their resources were limited, they were locked up by only two social workers and two nurses. Despite the big number of children they had to care for, Ribelo said that it was not that difficult to run the institution to herself believed.

"At first, the task may seem daunting, but but instantly I had instilled in them the value of discipline," she added.

She recalled how her words were quick to follow her instructions during classes or meals and other activities.

Ribelo recalled how the children would line up to wait for their turn to bathe. Later, they would go to the closet into which their clothes were stored. According to her, if all were assured her how the children knew which clothes belonged to them.

"Their instructor (sister Ribelo) were of the same colour and color and they only differed in size," she said. "But for some reason, they would tell me or the social worker helping them. That's not my color."

At meal time, the children would stand patiently by their assigned chairs and wait for the food to be served.

"I would sing a bell to tell them to sit down, to say their prayers before meals and to start eating. (Times in if they were eddies," Ribelo recalled with a laugh.

Like Ribelo, Sr. Beatriz Montemayor, R.C., who was the last mother superior of the orphanage, misses waking one of the children at White Cross.

"I enjoyed my stay here at White Cross. I miss it, especially the babies. When I look at them, I feel my problems drift away," she said.

A CAREGIVER and her wards play a game.

JAR BEHOLDER! Babies are taken good care by the orphanage.

Established in 1936, the orphanage in San Juan is home to 115 children aged 6 and below

THE FACADE of the auditorium was designed by National Artist Pablo Antonio.

METRO BRIEFS

Teenager kills self

A CAPAS (Tarlac) resident was found dead in her home at Brgy. Tarlac, Manila on Saturday night. The body of Rosalyn Escalona, 18, was found hanging inside the toilet by her father, Leopoldo. The victim's death was classified by the Manila Police District homicide division as a suicide due to the circumstantial evidence on the case. Escalona's parents had already been married when she was born. Escalona's father said it was because he found a guy his daughter was with overnight in their house that prior to the incident. The victim had studied elementary in the Tarlac school.

Alison M. Luna

Peace Batoo relay final leg in Manila

BOY SCOUTS and Rovers from Metro Manila and different provinces will gather at the Rizal Park Historical Site of the Manila City Hall on March 10 for the culmination of the Asia-Pacific Rover Peace Batoo relay. The batoo, which aims to promote peace throughout the Asia-Pacific region, is made up of three pieces which have been separately passed on from country to country since the start of the relay in August last year in Fiji, Papua New Guinea. The batoo segment's recently arrived in the Philippines and was also in Singapore, China and Zamboanga. They will be received here by Makati, San Juan and Quezon City. On March 10, Boy Scouts and Rovers from these areas will march with the batoo segments to the Rizal Park. Other activities on the day will be arranged only one. The batoo will be taken to London in August for presentation to participants of the World Scout Jamboree in celebration of the 100th year of Scouting.

Seminar for women only

IN COMMEMORATION of International Women's Day yesterday, Rise Boutique Banquet will talk about "Courage to the Heart of a Woman" on 1:30 p.m., Thursday, March 8 at the Boutique Room on Mezzanine Center in Greenbelt 3 in Makati City. The activity, which is for women only, is the first of a series of seminars organized by the Makati-on Group of the Business Women's Network Seminar Series. For inquiries, please call 8810-0000.

LUNAR ECLIPSE
A sculpture on the Cathedral of Lausanne is pictured in front of the moon at the beginning of a lunar eclipse in Lausanne March 3. REUTERS

Religious surge in once-atheist China takes leaders by surprise

SHANGHAI, CHINA—QIN HAOJIE religious moment came after a walk in the evening rain two years ago to a mansion for a ceremony that her mother had helped her to attend.

Qin's mother converted to Buddhism two years earlier despite her husband's open hostility to religion, and quietly nudged her daughter into hosting a look for herself.

"I got dinner at about 8 o.m., and was told the ceremony was delayed by an hour," said Qin, a 23-year-old design student. "At about 8:45, all of the suddenly the sky grew clear and the rain came out and people began observing and overcoming their the rest. Buddha was about to appear in the sky. Although I didn't see the Buddha myself, I was amazed, and I began to feel the power of God."

Qin's story, although unique to her family, has an end-line that is fast becoming commonplace, as Chinese by the tens of millions shed decades of state-imposed atheism. The phenomenon has gained momentum so fast that it appears to have taken the government by surprise.

A recent poll by East China Normal University estimated that 31.4 percent of Chinese 16 or older are religious, putting the number of believers at roughly 400 million.

In recent years, official estimates have placed the number of believers at around 100 million, but the fact that the new survey's results were not only made public but were also reported by the government-controlled Chinese news media suggests that the survey has been given at least some official credence.

However, in China, there is no separation of church and state as the ruling Communist Party theoretically enforces, administers all religious affairs and appoints all religious officials.

Perhaps the most popular time of the year for Chinese to engage in public worship is the traditional Chinese New Year, which began last month. Buddhist and Taoist temples, in particular, overflowed with visitors who prayed for success or the health of their near households.

Official attitudes toward religion have gradually loosened in China in recent years, enabling the resurgence of popular belief. Places of worship for the five officially recognized faiths—Buddhism, Taoism, Catholicism, Protestantism and Islam—have been revamped or built anew, and public worship allowed (again), amid signs that the government sees limited religiosity as a useful component of its drive to build what it calls a "harmonious society."

Chinese experts say the growing popularity of religion belief has been driven by social crises involving corruption and the expanding gap between rich and poor. AFP

In St. Petersburg, police break up anti-Putin rally

SAINT PETERSBURG—RUSSIAN POLICE detained about 50 protesters on Saturday as 1,000 people demonstrated in Saint Petersburg against President Vladimir Putin's hardline policies.

Demonstrations at the so-called "march of the dissenters" broke through a police cordon aimed at to keep them in the main square, and scuffles ensued as they marched along Nevsky Prospekt, the main avenue of Russia's second city.

Police said nearly 50 people were arrested during the protest. The Other Russia opposition alliance, which organized the march, said about 200 people were detained in total. It held the questionable.

The demonstrators, from across the political spectrum, chanted "Disgrace," "Russia without Putin" and "Our main the war open Constitution."

Some carried in floats over their heads while others brandished placards, reading "Putin is a mercenary" and "Everyone to the streets of Russia," referring to former prime minister and presidential candidate Mikhail Kasyanov's. AFP

WORLDBRIEFS

Saudi, Iran agree to fight Sunni-Shiite strife

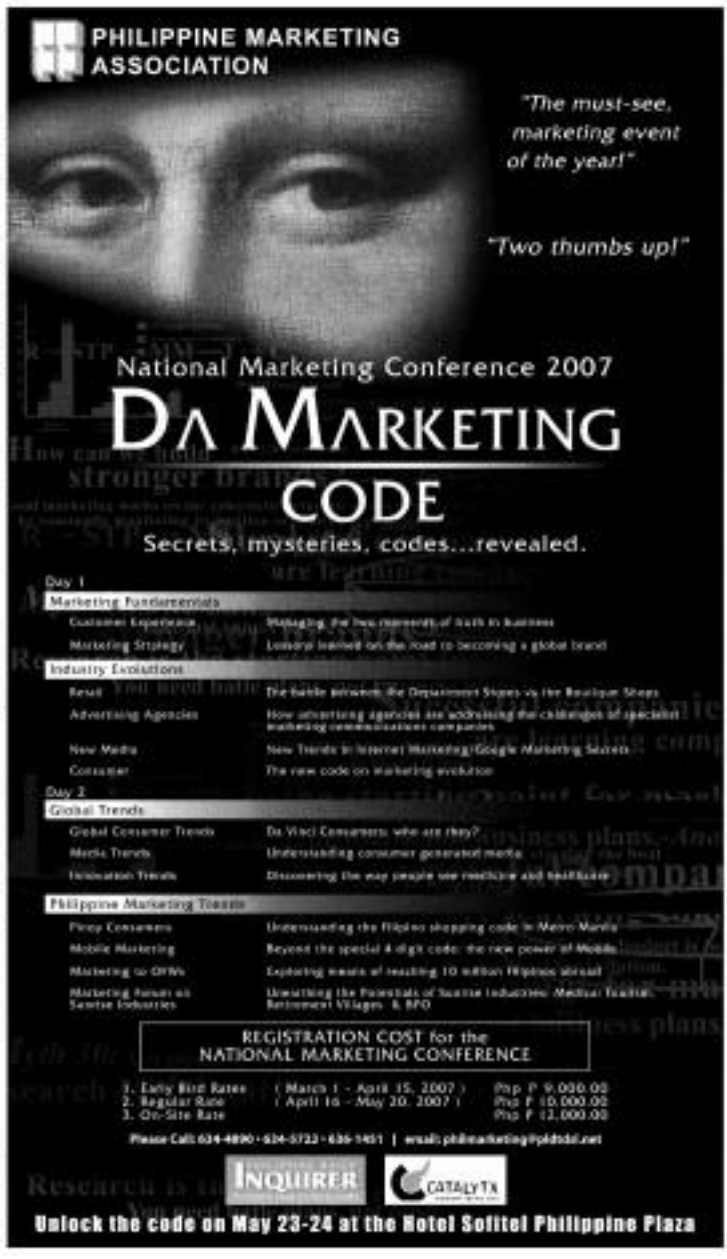
RIYADH—The leaders of regional heavyweights Iran and Saudi Arabia agreed of Monday in Riyadh to fight growing Sunni-Shiite strife, saying Riyadh was the greatest danger facing the region. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad satellite and Sanctioning Abdullah agreed at their meeting in Saturday that their two countries would work together to thwart "enemy" plots seeking to divide the Islamic world. "The two leaders affirmed that the greatest danger presently threatening the Islamic nation is the attempt to fuel the fire of strife between Sunni and Shiite Muslims, and that efforts must concentrate on combating these attempts and closing ranks," Saudi Arabia's official SPA news agency added. The meeting between Sheikh Abdullah and Iran is a Muslim schism is one bold against a backdrop of mounting fears that the sectarian bloodshed engulfing Iraq could spill over into the region. Relations between Riyadh and Tehran have been strained by the war in Iraq, with Riyadh's officials wary to accuse Shiite Iran of meddling in the next ruling Sunni minority there. AFP

US emissions seen growing without letup

THE BUSH administration estimates that the United States' emissions of gases that contribute to global warming will grow nearly as fast through the next decade as they did the previous decade, according to a long-delayed report being completed by the United Nations. The document, titled "Climate Action Report," emphasizes that the experience from progress toward a goal Bush laid out in a 2002 speech that pledged to cut emissions gross of a slower rate than the economy. Described speech, to have considerable considerably lessening "greenhouse gas intensity" without requiring by real limits on the gases. But when viewed the report, which consists of reports to the United Nations and policy descriptions, projects emissions to increase by almost 30 percent between 2000 and 2010. The report says "business as usual" scenario, in which there is no government action to limit emissions, would result in a 34 percent increase over the same period. AFP

East Timor rebel escapes as Aussie troops storm base

DILI—East Timorese rebel leader Gastao Salsinha escaped what the military says stormed his stronghold, killing four of the rebellion, a defiance official said Sunday. The fugitive's whereabouts were unknown, authorities said, but there are no fear martial law was declared. Gunfire was heard and cars set alight. "I can confirm that the International Security Force this morning conducted operations in Same, south of Dili," a spokesman for Department of Defense spokesperson, told AFP. "The purpose of the operations was to apprehend Alfredo Reinado and his associates. At this stage, no number's approximated fire, however, operations with soldiers and tech fires to see the." AFP



The WORLD

Editor Lorenzo B. Queco

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Iraq Qaida group posts video of execution of 18

BAGHDAD—A GROUP LINKED to al-Qaida in Iraq which said it killed 18 policemen to avenge the alleged rape of a Sunni woman has posted a video on the Internet showing a row of men being shot at point blank range.

The video opens with the men, all blindfolded, sitting and standing in rows and on various footage which blames the execution on the Iraqi government for ignoring the demands of the so-called "Islamic State of Iraq."

The video then shows masked gunmen chanting praise to Allah, standing behind along row of men kneeling in a muddy ditch amid a patch of trees, their hands tied behind their backs.

The gunmen then begin firing at the backs of the heads of the men, who slump forward one after another. The gunmen continue firing at their bodies, still shouting.

"This operation is only a drop in the bucket, and what will come is more severe and heavier, with the permission of Allah the Almighty," a message on the screen warns.

Interior ministry operations director Brig. Gen. Abdel Karim Khalaf told AFP Saturday that 14 officers taking part in the operation were ambushed on Thursday had been found dead in Kaqeita, north of Baghdad.

Shortly afterwards, a coalition of insurgent groups led by al-Qaida enthusiasm at the "Islamic State of Iraq" said in an Internet message the hostages would be killed to avenge "the alleged rape of a chaste woman by Shiite police. /AFP

THIS grab taken from a video posted March 4 on the Internet allegedly shows the execution of 18 kidnapped Iraqi policemen. AFP

UN's Big 5 fail to settle all differences on Iran

WASHINGTON—MAJOR POWERS failed on Saturday to settle all their differences over a second UN sanctions resolution against Iran for its nuclear work but remain committed to passing one soon, the United States said.

"There is still some work to be done on a few outstanding issues, but all parties remain committed to a second resolution in the near future," state department spokesperson Sean Mc Cormack said in a statement issued after the first permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany held a conference call to discuss a new UN Security Council resolution against Iran.

The United States and leading European countries suspect Iran is seeking to build nuclear weapons under the cover of 6 billion euros in programs. Tehran denies the charge and says its program is for generating electricity.

The new measures under discussion are a follow-up to a key Security Council resolution passed on Dec. 23 that imposed trade sanctions on sensitive nuclear materials and technology as well as other penalties after Iran refused to suspend uranium enrichment. The sanctions would be suspended if Iran complied.

The state department put a positive gloss on Saturday's discussions but they appeared to have fallen short of US hopes that the group—Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States as well as Germany—would be able to agree on the elements of a resolution during the conference call.

US and European diplomats have said the new sanctions are expected to include a mandatory travel ban on Iranian officials involved in the nuclear program and an expansion of the list of banned nuclear material and technology Iran may import and export.

Also under consideration is enlarging the list of Iranian officials whose assets were frozen in the December resolution. Reuters

Demand for India child laborers undiminished

CALCUTTA, INDIA—SEVEN DAYS a week, 6-year-old Jasmina K. runs before dawn to fetch water for the household where she works as a maid. She washes, sweeps and finds until about 11 at night.

After her father died, she said, her mother sent her and her sister from their West Bengal village to work as maids here. Each month, she is paid 100 rupees, or about $2.25.

India has no outright ban on child labor and had long allowed the employment of children under 14 in all but what are deemed "hazardous" occupations. But last October a sweeping new law took effect. It prohibits the employment of children under 14 in hotels and restaurants, and as domestic servants.

Five months later, children's rights advocates say the law has had little effect.

"Because of the booming economy and the spread of the consumer family, we've seen a rise in demand for domestic help at a time when it's becoming more expensive to employ people," said Jean Dreze, an Indian of the International Labor Organization.

Rising an 8-year-old, fresh from India's rural heartland, is a simple matter. Impoverished villagers willingly rent their children out to middlemen who promise a better life in the cities, children's advocacy groups say.

"Thousand agencies in Delhi and Mumbai are growing like mushrooms," said Bhandwalder Mukhiya of Save the Children UK. "It is extremely lucrative business."

The Indian government estimates that 11 million children under the age of 14 are employed; children's advocates say the figure could be closer to 60 million. AFP

INDIAN children celebrate Holi, the Hindu festival of colors, March 4. AP

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SPORTS

Editor Teddyboy S. Molavedra

Mavs win 15th straight /A31

It AIN'T cool if it ain't the REAL thing!
DASHIELD

Maiden HK shows way

All-Filipino crew steers tycoon's massive yacht

By Jeannine W. Paje

A MASSIVE 131-FOOT YACHT from Hong Kong had the fleet eyes on servers' head here reclaimed in the 18th of the action yesterday to the 800 nautical-mile sprint of the 5th a-Standard Insurance Manila to Boracay Race.

Maiden Hong Kong, a boat 131 Gerbits skippered by Rizal, Pinoy and with an all-Filipino crew, crossed the field just midnight to idyllic resolution off the White Island Puerto located between Batangas and Mindoro Island.

The race bulletin released yesterday said that Kandoo, an Ikard 53 operated by the veteran Ray Ordonez, managed to close in on the UK yacht to pace the lead fleet.

Pong, a former commodore of the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club, a among The Emirate Foreign owned of an unforgettable humor time of 27 hours about 5 AM., which also had an all-Filipino crew in the 2004 edition.

Defending champion Cruisin said, a Ikard 40 skippered by the Philippines' Ernesto Echauz, was in the middle of the fleet in the 20 foreign and local racers head toward the Gulab off Boracay Island in Aklan.

KAPANGOK, skippered by Raj Ordoñez, leads the Philippine fleet behind Maiden Hong Kong.

Other expected strong finishers are MKL, 49' Hinrich of Australia's Geoffrey Hill and Blue Milk 51 Fidelis Arnie of RCI's Frederick Kenneth.

"It's really a tough field," said tournament chair Jean Arevalo Jr. "And it has been an ideal sailing race course. The winds are favorable, they're strong. In sailing, our fronts are relying on the strength of the wind. Our engine is our wind."

The seasoned yachtsmen sailed out of the Manila Yacht Club on Saturday afternoon.

All racers are expected to dock in the pristine waters of Boracay today. Action resumes with the fashion and offshore events around Boracay Island and the Tablas Strait for the 28th President's Cup Regatta.

The battle-hardy yachts close participants from Thailand, Malaysia, Europe, Australia, China, Japan and Southeast Asia.

The awarding for the Manila to Boracay race will be on March 6 at the Fun zone and Boracay.

In 2006, Advocat's Turkey 46' Centennial, helmed by Jamie Wilmot, topped three of the 40 to-chose races to win the President's Cup in Subic.

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Alcano, Django advance to last 32

FOUR FILIPINO CAMPAIGNERS, LED BY RECENT WORLD POOL CHAMPION Ronnie Alcano, won their second straight matches Saturday night and advanced to the round-of-32 in the 2nd World 9-Ball Championships at the Al Bustan Rotana Hotel in Fujairah, United Arab Emirates.

Adding shame to the next round, according to a report from Ben Mukherjee, chair of the Billiards and Snooker Congress of the Philippines, now former world No. 1 Francisco "Django" Bustamante, 2006 World Pool League winner Dennis Orcollo and seventh Filipino wonder kid Lee Vilamag.

Defending champion Alvin "Baby Face" Reyes and compatriot Jayhe Weenie were going for their second wins while five other Filipinos with 1-1 cards, including Lee Van Corteza, remained in contention, Mukherjee said.

The 34-year-old Alcano edged Lebanese Jonny Abu (9-6) in Group E, Bustamante beat another OPM Al Amora Ocampo (8-5) and Orcollo crushed Akihiko Sakamoto of Finland (9-2) in Group F and Vilamag outgunned pro Aaron Hart of Canada (8-3) in Group A.

Reyes opened his defense of the World Championships at his Al Bustan Rotana Hotel conference room in Fujairah, United Arab Emirates.

ALCANO

BUSTAMANTE

8-ball championship to win, routing Filipino in-laws of Venezuela, 9-2, last Saturday.

(Saying flawless), Reyes cluttered four straight racks from a 4-2 advantage to underscore his determination to keep the crown.

Corteza also won his first match against Richard Bolduc of Austria, 9-2, to set later Saturday.

However, Corteza, top player of Negros Billiard Sealife (NBS), bowed out the second 16 to Ian Saiza of Taiwan, 9-3, Sunday and needed to win his last match in program.

Jayson Bantolantoc, also an OPM in the Middle East, bounced back from a loss to Thorstein Hohenstein of Germany, 9-6, to clobber Roberto Firmo of Brazil, 9-2, yesterday. Mario Echevarria, another OPM, bowed to Niels Feijen of the Netherlands, 8-4.

Alba and Al Jaber Stringa also have 1-1 records.

Other renowned entries in the round-of-32 were Ewa Feijen, defending champion Phi Chi-Cheng of Taiwan, Gerco Hilderkamp of Germany and Mercedes Gonzalez of Belgium and Maxwell Richard of Ilaro.

Wu bested Thomas Gumm of Germany, 8-6, Hilderkamp upset Thomas "The Lone Machine" Engert of Germany, 9-3, and Pedro Chavez Thorsten Hohenstein of Germany, 8-7). Marlon Bernardino, coach/trainer

Tagaytay vaults to 2nd spot in Asian team chess

Standings after three rounds:

1) pairs—Tagaytay (Indonesia) 6½—Ogidiy (RP) 6½—Shanglin (China) Jiang Chao) 7.5—Gan Khar Guek (Singapore) Gomez (Phil) 6½—Tolentino (Phil) Clemente (Phil) Cabardo Chi Lan Ing (Singapore) 6½—Sabrenda (Iraq) Sahib (Iraq) 6½—Cabal (Phil) Sabas (Phil) 6½—Cabos (Indonesia) 20—Amadeo (Phil) 6½

TEHRAN, IRAN—DEFENDING champion Tagaytay (Philippines) threw in full might against sixth-seed Dalmacan (Iran), posting welcome 3.5-0.5 win in the third round Saturday night to advance to solo second place in the 75th Asian Chess Team Championship at the Imam Grand Hotel here Saturday.

Grandmaster Mark Paragua and Rogelio Antonio Jr. and International Master Oliver Dimakiling battled their respective opponents while IM Nikolay Sydow Jr. was much to the Filipino chessfan's delight, the only Filipino player in no-win situation.

Paragua, the third highest rated player here with an Elo rating of 2573, whipped GM Mahmudjon Ergashev 4½ moves of the King's Indian Defense, while Antonio, the country's leading scorer in the Turin Olympiad in Italy last year, overpowered Fide Master Severus Dariuo in 71 moves of the Sicilian Najdorf.

Dimakiling bounced back from a second-round setback to beat Abdi Sadeghi on board three.

Sydow, the youngest member of the five-man Tagaytay RP team, drew with Iran's No. 3, GM Amir Bagheri, to round four.

The 13-year-old Sa provided the Filipinos' lone victory against Rah Ahmad Reyhani in the second round.

Overall, the team is backed by Manila Standard Television has a three-round total of nine points, one point behind Uzbekistan.

The Filipinos occupy 11th seed behind Armenia (Iran), 13.5; 12.5, in the first round. Iranians and split the match with Sikh seed Sikh Adam, 2.5, in the second round each Saturday.

Pachenko, led by Gilo Pearl Bernas and Ray Bonacolo, demolished sixth seed Taiwanese Board, 3-1, and third seed Saiga (Iran), 3-1.

In the fourth round—set at 5 p.m. Sunday (10 p.m. Sunday in Manila), the Filipinos and the Kazakhs will dispute the lead.

"I like our chances right now," said Tagaytay RP team captain Wil. Ironic Monica. "Pachenko, which beaten three strong Cities in its line-up, is our strongest rival in the tournament and our fourth-round encounter will be crucial in our title-retention bid."

ERNESTO Gejon savours with a left straight to Wisan Sor Sacharpo's face in the eighth round. NOEL ORTEGA

Gejon whips Thai; Pacman snubs own fight promotion

By Salvan L. Lagandaog, Correspondent

LADDY ERNESTO GEJON BOOMED HIS all-around skills with an easy unanimous decision win over Thailand's Wisan Sor Sacharpo Saturday night at the Dipidi Sukhumvit Hotel in Bangkok.

Two judges saw the bout at 100-91, while the third had it 100-90 in favor of Gejon, a protege of promoter Rey "Wakee" Sahid.

The bout served as the main event of the "Bangkok Battle" card put up by Sahid's Bangkok-based Fernstone, Top Rank and Sahid's PBN International.

The win improved Gejon's record to 23 wins against a loss and a draw, and Gejon later ups her yet another title crack in the WIBA, where he used to be the No. 3 mini-mosquitoweight contender.

Pacquiao was a no-show, perhaps to avoid getting beat which he got plenty during his brief visit to Cebu on Feb. 24. He quarrel for four rounds Saturday afternoon in Gen. Santos City against mere Malaysian and must-win-ajan, and I were unpredictably making sure he went forward to his most fight against Jorge Solis.

Three Sahid fighters lost with Sipid Sasiso getting beaten for the first time by an Olympian Jacob Sorn by TKO in the second round; Jhoje Dabalo absorbing a fifth round TKO from Danilo Pena and Gideon Jumbo losing by majority decision to Armando Cura in a re-shortened three 2000 bout.

Other results: Bert Lagura d. Mitch Ramos, 30-109 (unof.); Lorente Palmer L. Dan Pangkor unanimous decision (8 out.); Joel Bakla d. Bat Lagunsi, split decision; Dave Pastor d. Jacky Sam Jaka split decision; Rudy Marshall d. Michael Gun (10 bout).

NL Olympic Festival gets going today

By Jane Navarro

VIGAN—TRAINING ITS SIGHTS on the 2012 Olympics, the 2nd Philippine Olympic Festival unfolds today in this picturesque city aiming to unearth a potential treasure trove of talents who may don the national colors in the Games in London.

A vast field of about 3,000 athletes and officials from 31 participating regions will compete in 15 disciplines, including 12 Olympic sports, in 16 different venues here.

No less than Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco, POC chair Rubino Antonio and first lady Gov. Grace Luis "Chavit" Singson will open the week-long festivities at the newly refurbished Quirino Stadium.

The event is the Northern Luzon qualifier of the POF, which will hold five more elimination legs in Mindanao, Visayas, Hindi and the National Capital Region before culminating in the national championships at the end of the year.

Hindi welcome to the elimination stages will culminate in the national championships to be held at the Hindi Memorial Sports Complex and Philippine Arena where they will compete against national athletes.

Basketball games will kick off action at the UNP gym. Other sports are athletics, archery, badminton, beach volleyball, bowling, boxing, cycling, football, futsal, golf, gymnastics, judo, karate, lawn tennis, shooting, softball, swimming, table tennis, taekwondo, tennis, volleyball, weightlifting and wushu.

Athletes will be billeted at the Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College, Ilocos Sur Community College and Ilocos Sur National High School.

Singson said the Ilocos Sur provincial government has allocated P10 million for the POF.

Cojuangco said the POC has also allocated P10 million for the POF.

Antonio said the POC is also sending a delegation to the Asian Indoor Games in Macau from March 16 to 25.

Cojuangco

DWIE Howard(at right) shoots and gets a foul off Dwight Howard. AP

Mavs win 15th straight

DALLAS—THE STREAKING DALLAS MAVericks won their franchise-record 15th successive game on Saturday, Jason Kidd's 29 points and 15 assists helping them beat the Orlando Magic 105-86.

The Mavericks (50-9) have won 20 of their last 21 games after starting the season with four straight losses, and have 22 straight wins at home, another team record.

The losers are not easy boosters, as the Magic pushed them all the way, tying the game at 90-90 with just over three from Jameer Nelson with 3:57 left in the fourth quarter.

But the Mavericks responded with five straight points, becoming the club's fastest team in history to get to the 50-game plateau in a season.

Josh Howard's 3-pointer with 1:20 left gave Dallas a 101-96 lead and the Magic could get no closer than three points in the final 90 seconds. Dirk Nowitzki's basket with 7.9 seconds left sealed the win.

Nowitzki said he was not overly impressed with the team's record, as Dallas looks to avenge a loss to the NBA Finals to Miami last year.

"If we go 82-0, it doesn't mean anything if we don't win the championship," Nowitzki told reporters. "We know we have a lot of work to do until then."

Playing their third game on the road in four nights and back-to-back after losing in San Antonio on Friday, the Magic opened a 42-40 lead at the half and led 81-75 early in the fourth quarter after starting the final 12 minutes with nine unanswered points.

But the Mavericks kept their composure and answered the early fourth-quarter surge by Orlando with a 12-3 run of their own to regain the lead.

Nowitzki finished with 24 points, nine rebounds and seven assists for the Mavericks, who have beaten Orlando nine straight times. Howard added 21 points for Dallas, which shot 56 percent.

Dwight Howard had 15 points and 14 rebounds for Orlando (28-32), and Hedo Turkoglu added 15 points.

LeBron James had 36 points to help the Cleveland Cavaliers to an easy 120-97 win over the Toronto Raptors.

The lowly Boston Celtics won their third straight game, snapping New Jersey's eleven game winning streak by beating the Nets 96-94 in overtime.

The Detroit Pistons won for the 14th time in 15 games, getting 19 points and nine assists from Chauncey Billups in a 92-89 victory over the Memphis Grizzlies.

The San Antonio Spurs won their season high eighth straight game, Tony Duncan scoring 26 points in a 97-74 win over the Houston Rockets.

Reuters

COMPLETE NBA RESULTS: Boston 96, New Jersey 94; NY 90, Cleveland 102; Detroit 92, Memphis 89; Charlotte 91, Atlanta 83; Chicago 86, Indiana 85; Houston 74, San Antonio 97; Minnesota 89, Golden State 97; Phoenix 91, Sacramento 96; Portland 92, Utah 97; LA Clippers 87, Seattle 94; LA Lakers 107, Milwaukee 97

Marquez breaks foe's nose, takes WBC crown

CARSON, CALIFORNIA—RAFAEL MARQUEZ took the WBC super bantamweight crown from Israel Vazquez when Vazquez had to quit after severe wounds because of a broken nose on Saturday.

Marquez landed a straight right in the first round that broke Vazquez's nose and buckled the champion's knees instinctually.

Although he was hurting, difficulty breathing, Vazquez caught Marquez with a left uppercut in fourth into down to the delight of the crowd.

"I was only able to breathe through my mouth and that's why I was taking a lot of shots," Vazquez said through a translator. "When I came back to my corner the last round, I couldn't breathe at all and I COULDN'T. Breath, I mean I, that's it."

Marquez (SEE) realize he had broken Vazquez's nose and was surprised when the referee ended the fight. Vazquez immediately came over to congratulate the new champion.

"I was surprised when he stopped it because he had dropped me in the (first round). I thought it was done," Marquez said, also speaking through a translator.

Both fighters said they would like to have a rematch.

Marquez's Marquez (37-3, 31 knockouts) was ahead on two judges' cards through seven rounds, and the third had it even. Marquez, who was born in Mexico City and lives in Los Angeles, won 41-4, with 35 knockouts.

"He (Marquez) told me right after the first round that his nose was broken," Roach, who blames Marquez's trainer, said. "He wanted to stop a couple of rounds earlier, but I told him to catch it up because I thought Marquez was tiring." AP

Federer defeats Youzhny, nears streak record

DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES—TOP-seeded Roger Federer won the Dubai Open for the fourth time in five years by beating Mikhail Youzhny of Russia, 6-4, 6-3, in Saturday's final.

Federer won his 41st straight match, tying Björn Borg for the fourth-longest streak in the Open era and leaving him five short of Guillermo Vilas' 1977 record. Jimmy Connors (1974) and John McEnroe (1982 to 1984) are also in front of Federer.

"I am on a nice roll right now and I am playing in Indian Wells next," Federer said. "I have won there the last three years, so hopefully I can win again and beat Vilas' record there.

"Records are meant to be broken...but if I don't, it's all right," he added. "I will start all over again."

His last defeat was to Andy Murray in the second round of the Cincinnati Masters last August.

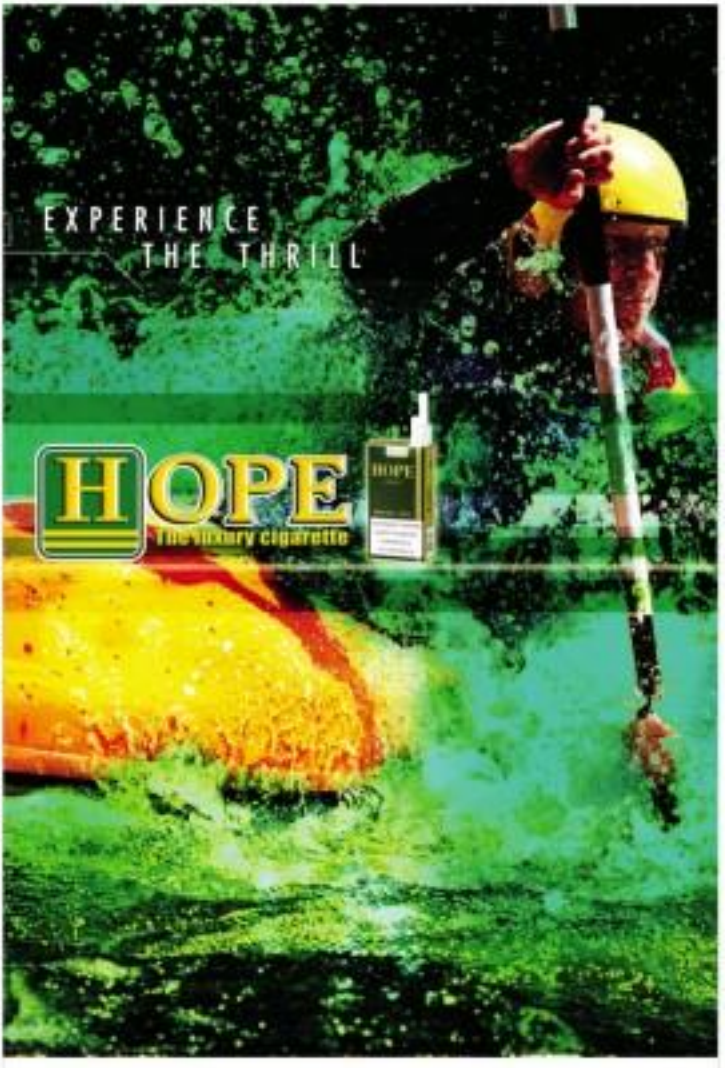
Federer, who lost to last year's final to Rafael Nadal, extended his winning streak to 24 matches. Youzhny, who was in Australian last week, beat Nadal in the quarterfinals.

Youzhny broke Federer in the first game with a crosscourt forehand and held serve to lead 2-0. But Federer broke in the fourth, eighth and 11th games to close out the first set.

"I must admit that Mikhail put a lot of pressure on the start of the match, and I really needed to step up my game," Federer said. "I am delighted that I have managed to win here again.

In the second set, Federer broke in the second and ninth games. AP

FEDERER



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Classy win for Mendoza in Clark Sprint Duathlon

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REIGNING ASIAN DUATHLON CHAMPION Ryan Mendoza took command early and then left his biggest rivals gasping in his wake to take the second leg of the 20/40/5 Clark Sprint Duathlon Series in Clark Field, Pampanga.

The 20-year-old Air Force standout shed his rivals the 5K run/30K bike/5K run in 1 hour, 30 minutes and 18 seconds, almost five minutes clear of national teammates Augusto Benedicto.

Benedicto negotiated the distance in 1:35:08 and host national triathlon champion George Vilog (1:37:22) to complete the 50-strong field.

"Actually, wala po kaming (we don't yet have) proper training," said Mendoza. "Medyo pa rin namin yung (We are still running for our) results from our series (optional)."

Mendoza, a native of Pampanga, said he and his teammates need to step up training now for the Asian Duathlon Championship and the Southeast Asian Games in December, both in Thailand.

In the women's race, former Asiandua Opening and runner Rose Nagtalon thoroughly showed up with former junior triathlon champion and national duathlon member Rose Lopez. The event was also the first leg of the series organized by Multisports Events of CMC.

"I competed in Singapore my last legs after I had a (grade) three weeks ago, but of course what happened was an additional motivation for me," said Nagtalon, the pretty duathlete from GP Alfonso who finished 1:34.15.

She ordered the lead from Nagtalon-Benigno Salinas (finishing 1:36.30) to lap of the competition supported by Clark Development Corp. Tourism Department, Alaska and McDonald's Clark.

Nagtalon clocked 1:31.46 while another national team member Monica Torres took third place in 1:40.02.

Other top prize categories: [illegible]

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Young Benitez on fast lane to karting glory

JAY Benitez hugs three titles in the 2007 Golden Wheel Awards

Gabica, Kiamco keep clean slates

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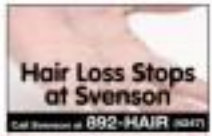

Alsons, Thai firm eye $350-M power project

Aboitiz may also join 200-MW Davao venture

By Doris C. Dumlao

A CONSORTIUM LED BY ALSONS CONSOLIDATED RESOURCES Inc. and the Electricity Generating Public Company of Thailand (Egco) plans to build a $350-million, 200-megawatt coal-fired power plant in Davao before the year ends.

Alsons chief finance officer Luis Virata Jr. told the business that the Aboitiz group and Toyota Tsusho might also take part in the project.

Aboitiz Equity Ventures Inc. and Toyota Tsusho, through subsidiary Toyota Tsusho Power, are also Alsons and Egco's partners in two other power plants in Mindanao.

"The aim is start is now. There will be higher demand in the next two to three years," Virata said, noting that the targeted financial closing for the project was this November.

"We've now preparing the equity for the project. It will take three years to construct the power plant so we'll finish construction by 2010," he said.

Coral Holdings Corp., a joint venture between Alsons and Egco, controls 81 percent of Western Mindanao Power Corp., which operates a 100-MW facility in Zamboanga, and Southern Philippines Power Corp., which runs a 50-MW power plant in General Santos. ADV and Toyota Power own 25 percent and 20 percent, respectively, in both companies.

He said the same proportion of ownership was being considered for the proposed power plant in Davao, which would require an initial equity of $140 million.

Asked how the construction of the new power plant would be financed, Virata said: "We have existing cash flow from the two power plants we already own. We will use dividends from that, then we'll probably raise some

ALSONS/B3

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■ **Gov't eyes P40B** for infra projects /B12

Sale of more PNOC-EDC stake eyed

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Larson

STATE-LED PHILIPPINE NATIONAL OIL Co. (PNOC) is planning to raise at least P10 billion this year from the sale of another 3 billion shares or 20 percent of geothermal energy producer PNOC Energy Development Corp.

PNOC president Jesus Arguiza said during a roundtable session with the business media staff last week that the sale would likely happen after June 13 that year, when the lock-up period on the sale of most PNOC-EDC shares ends.

PNOC-EDC raised P16.7 billion from its initial public offering of 11.2 billion shares last December, touted as the biggest IPO last year. PNOC-EDC also listed a total of 13 billion in outstanding shares.

Half of the estimated P10 billion in proceeds from the additional offer this year will be given to the government as its share in the asset privatization program, then at the other half will be used to reactivate PNOC's renewable energy business.

"To support this plan, PNOC will change the primary purpose of one of its subsidiaries, PNOC Exploration and Engineering Corp., from a shipyard facility to that of a company that will hold interests in renewable energy such as solar, wind and hydroelectric power as well as biofuels.

PNOC-EDC is a wholly owned subsidiary of PNOC, a state-holding entity.

SALE/B4

Interest rates 'artificially low,' says Neda chief

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE GOVERNMENT'S CHIEF economic planner believes local interest rates have fallen to "artificially low" levels and should also follow a bit higher at about 7-8 percentage points above the country's inflation rate.

Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri said the fall in interest rates to historical lows would hopefully create demand for bank loans, allowing the rates to stabilize at a slightly higher level.

"You assess it to stabilize at the right equilibrium because right now it's too low. It's artificially low. It's below inflation so there's a negative yield," said Neri, who is also a member of the policy-making Monetary Board of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

A negative yield, which discourages savings, means that earnings from fixed income instruments like deposits, bonds or other savings instruments are simply eroded by the inflation rate of the average increase in the price of major consumer goods.

"If inflation is about 3-3.5 percent, interest rates will probably hover at 5 percent," Neri said.

As of the last government auction, the one-up 91-day treasury bill rate—the benchmark used by banks in pricing loans—had soared to 2.685 percent from 5.008 during the previous auction. This was below the 2.3-6 percent annual inflation rate expected by the BSP for the month of February.

The year-on-year inflation rate had softened to a four-year low of 2.5 percent in January.

"What we're trying to see now is how the banks will react to this low interest rate environment. I've asked the central bank to look at the scenarios so we can be prepared," Neri said.

To force the banks to lend out instead of park most of their funds with the BSP, the monetary institution has revised the rating system on short-term money starting last November. Under the scheme, the BSP pays a lower rate on its borrowings in excess of certain levels. Only the first P5 billion gets paid with the 7.5 percent overnight borrowing rate. The next P5 billion yields 200 basis points less at 5.5 percent and anything in excess of P10 billion yields 400 basis points lower at 3.5 percent.

But the national government, through the Bureau of the Treasury, has not been borrowing much from the local market. Neri said, noting that the government should have reduced its offering during its bulk global bond issue in January.

"We borrowed $1 billion. That might even be too much for us. We should have borrowed more from the domestic market," he said.

"The BSP has done a lot. Treasury should do its part, borrow domestically," he noted.

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Where is our growth coming from?

THE GOVERNMENT HAS APPARENTLY BEgun to take more seriously the common lament that the supposed improvement of the Philippine economy is not being felt by not benefiting the wider majority of Filipinos. Economic Planning Secretary Romy Neri has acknowledged that the good news is the economy has largely been in the financial realm, particularly reflected in the equity and investment markets, but "few are actually benefiting from such good news. Much more work is needed, he admits, to spread the benefits of the improving economy.

Two out of three

In my economic briefings, I consistently emphasize the three basic indicators that affect the common people most directly: prices, jobs, and income—reflected in the inflation rate, unemployment and underemployment rates, and GDP growth rate. There's generally good news on one, but bad news on two. The trends on inflation and GDP growth have been generally positive, but the already bad jobs situation even worsened in 2006. The unemployment rate rose to an annual average of 7.39 percent, up from 7.2 percent the previous year. The number of unemployed increased by 196,000 to 2.986 million, while the number of employed rose by 1.5 percentage points to 83.7 percent. Clearly, we need to ramp up our ability to generate new and better-quality jobs in the economy.

Even on the two items where the news is generally good, it must be qualified that we're still falling short of our own targets. Take growth, Only Indonesia had a worse inflation record last year (they were in the double digits), the rest of our dynamic neighbors had even more stable prices than we had. Our GDP growth, respectable as it may be, was still near the bottom of the pack, as the economies of most of our Asean and Asian neighbors grew even faster than ours did.

Growth breakdown

The question, then continues to puzzle many: why our growing economy is not able to generate enough jobs to gainfully employ all new labor force entrants.

The key to the seeming puzzle is to examine more closely where the growth in the economy is coming from. Is growth coming from labor-intensive sectors (read, those that tend to generate more jobs as they grow? Or are we getting the growth mainly from industries that are inherently less job-creating (more capital-intensive)? Is the growth coming from regions where the largest numbers of the unemployed live? Is growth in sectors industries that require the skills that are available in the labor force?

To shed some light on these questions, I did some calculations on the national income accounts data, broken down by industry, by regions (provinces), and by types of the economy. Data on the breakdown of available job skills in the labor force are not so readily available, so I leave that aspect out of my analysis for now.

The picture I am getting shows a general mismatch between the sectors and regions where most of our economic growth is happening, and where the jobs are needed most.

Sectoral mismatch

According to the data, agriculture accounts for 36.7 percent of our workers, or until over a third. Unfortunately the farm sector contributed a measly 0.2 percent of the growth in the economy in the last quarter, or a mere 0.4 percentage point out of the 4.8 percent total growth posted by the economy. Meanwhile, the biggest sectoral contributors to growth were manufacturing and trading (wholesale and retail), each accounting for 1.1 percentage point of which over 22.5 percent each of the growth. But manufacturing provides only 9.2 percent of the jobs in the economy, while trading accounts for 16.8 percent. In other words, the two sectors that account for close to half (45 percent) of the economy's growth employ only about one-fourth (25 percent) of our workers. If we add transport, communication and storage (0.7 percentage points or 14.5 percent of the growth; 7.4 percent of labor force), then 60 percent of the growth is coming from sectors that provide only 33.4 percent of jobs. Little wonder, then, why the jobs story is not forthcoming as much as they should, even with good growth numbers.

Geographic imbalance

What about the regional breakdown? The numbers show that the biggest contributor to the economy's growth is—surprise, surprise—Metro Manila, accounting for 44.7 percent of the growth, or 2.1 percentage points out of the 4.8 percent GDP growth rate. The second-biggest source of the growth is Region 4 (Tabaran Visayas), followed by Region 7 (Central Visayas), contributing 6.5 percent. Together, the three regions accounted for 61.8 percent of the economy's growth—and set account for only 29.2 percent of the jobs. If we look at Mindanao, usually one of the underperforming regions of Regions 9 and 4, they accounted for 11.2 percent of the growth, but only 16.7 percent of the jobs. The growth, in short, is not occurring where the jobs should be.

This is what worries me about the disproportionate attention and public investments being poured into the so-called Subic-Clark-Metro Manila triangle. It may indeed buy us growth—up to 7 percent, if our friend and now Presidential Chief of Staff Joey Salceda would have his way—but growth for whom?

Comments are welcome at cbdbm@pldt.net.ph

Alsons, Thai firm eye $350-M ...

From page B1

from IFC International Finance Corp.)"

IFC is the private sector financing arm of the World Bank.

The consortium has yet to finalize the location of the new power plant but has short-listed possible sites within the Davao province.

"It depends on where the coal will come from, whether from near mouth or imported from Indonesia or will deliver into where it will be inland or beside the port or beside the sea," Yenzo said.

The first site being considered was in Davao Oriental, the country's environment province having the Pacific Ocean.

"But some were also considering inland (as coal source), so it could also be near barangay," Yenzo said.

Aensagani, a 5th class municipality in Davao del Sur, is one of the areas in Mindanao touted to have large unexplored coal deposits.

Coal is a sought after energy source world-wide because of its abundant supply and cheaper price. Now that clean coal technologies are available, the Philippine government encourages investments in coal exploration and development to help the country attain energy self-sufficiency.

The Philippines is largely a coal-consuming country with coal having a high contribution to the power generation mix at 27 percent in 2006. But the building of coal-fired power plants always faced stiff opposition from environmental groups.

Meeks, citing by the Alsons-a family, has major investments in energy and power, property development, and product distribution.

Cautious trading seen

From page B1

said Vivian Gomez, head of trading at BCBC Trust.

He added that while economic fundamentals remained solid, the heavily selling last week showed that the stock market was still susceptible to external factors.

All Capital forecasts said some volatility could be expected this week. "Further downside risks are imminent given the decline in global risk appetite especially after a correction of this magnitude. Note that some key markets such as the Philippines cannot be decoupled from major shocks brought about by developed markets," All Capital Securities said.

The online broker said that the PSE index "may still test key technical levels and thereafter it has seen may taper off in the weeks ahead.

"Although the market was shaken by the second decline of global equity prices, it hasn't changed anything regarding the country's fundamentals. It has taken its toll on the consumers and investor confidence but it should not have an immediate impact on the economy. On the cautious side, a further downturn in global equities can potentially result in a reversal on the inflated chains. For now, investors should not get swayed and carried away possible bottom. Instead, we should look at this as an opportunity and focus on bargain hunting," All Capital Securities said.

Global equities saw one of its steepest declines last week, triggered by a massive sell-off in China's stock markets.

The Shanghai Composite index fell three to 9 percent on Tuesday, just days after it established a new all-time high. Fears of an irrationally exuberant market and an over-heating economy forced officials to step in to keep things in control, sky-rocketing interest rates.

Elizabeth Jocelyn Lazaro

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Strong peso weakens confidence of Japan firms

By Rancel W. Domingo

THE STRENGTHENING OF THE PESO against the dollar has taken a toll on the country's attractiveness to investors as Japanese firms' confidence in the Philippines plunged to negative 13.7 in February.

According to a monthly survey conducted by the Japan External Trade Organization, the February rating worsened by 8.4 points from -5.3 in the previous month.

Japanese firms operating here gave the country such ratings amid an overall decline in confidence among respondents in the five original members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, including Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia.

Jetro said a major indicator for the decline was the observed level of confidence in the electric and electronics equipment sector, which at -20.3 was at its lowest level since August 2005.

The agency said this was due to production and inventory adjustments as well as declining demand in sales mainly because of the strong local currencies against the dollar.

In fact the Philippines, the February rating was the lowest since the -19.1 in July 2006, but the Japanese firm's outlook for the next two or three months is to see an improvement to -2.2 points.

In last month's survey, Thailand suffered the worst with a decline of 16 points to -21.1 while Malaysia's rating dropped 8.9 points to -13.9.

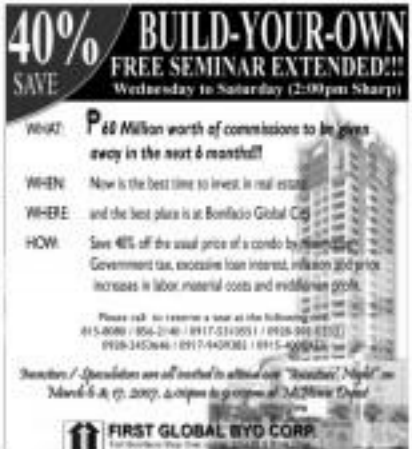
Group leader Shigeyasu's rating also suffered a decline with 6.1 points shaved, but business confidence remained on the positive side of 3.

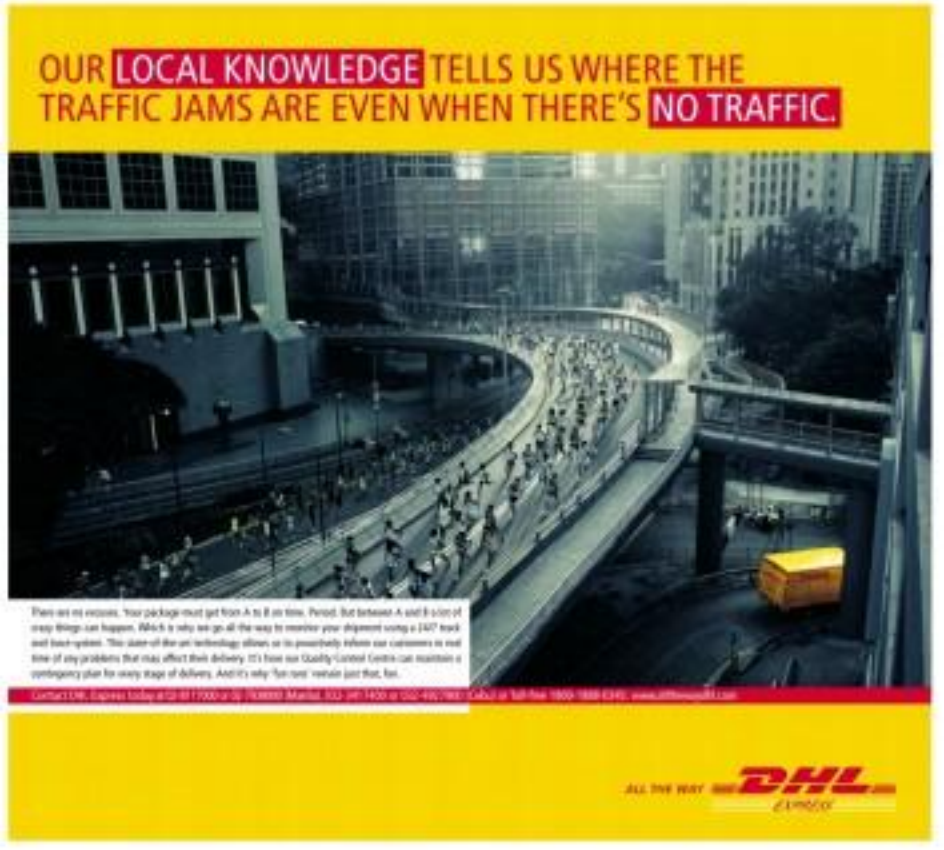
On the other hand, Indonesia logged its domestic's rating improved 8.7 points to -21.2.

The ratings measure year-on-year changes in business outlook for the month and the next three months ahead.

Ratings are expressed as diffusion indexes, which show the difference between positive and negative responses.

Philippine-based respondents to the Jetro's poll survey included 100 firms engaged in oil, chemicals, steel, metals, electric and electronic machinery, transportation machinery and other manufacturing sectors as well as construction, real estate, transport, communication, commerce, services and other non-manufacturing activities.





Gov't out to cut series of failed Transco biddings

Another auction expected as negotiated sale scrapped

By Abigail L. Ho
(first of two parts)

THE PHILIPPINES USED TO BE one of the most prosperous nations in Asia in the 1960s and 1970s.

Today, it is competing with the likes of Vietnam and Thailand for much needed foreign direct investments.

But this does not mean that the country is a laggard in all aspects. In the area of power sector restructuring, the Philippines is actually one of the leading countries in the region.

The passage of RA 9136, or the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001 (EPIRA), a mere six years ago made the country among the first to really take the plunge and deregulate its power sector.

Even economic powerhouse South Korea had to stop somewhere in the middle of its deregulation efforts to rethink its strategies.

But the Philippines pushed for ward.

History of failure

Six years later, however, many of the provisions in the Epira remain unfulfilled.

The country still has among the highest power rates in the region.

Retail competition and open access have yet to be introduced. Only 11 percent of the National Power Corp.'s generation assets have been privatized, and the National Transmission Corp. remains in the hands of the state.

The spotlight is now on the much delayed Transco privatization, which under Section 21 of the Epira, should have taken place six months after the effectivity of the law.

Transco operates the high-voltage lines that transport power from generation facilities to the distribution firms, which then bring the power to households and other users.

As the system operator, it also decides the dispatch schedule of power plants.

The government, through the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp., aimed for as much as 70 percent ownership in the Transco concession.

When the lines were sold, the Joint Congressional Power Commission wanted to ensure the Napocor privatization process by getting a private concessionaire to manage the state firm's not-quite-all trans mission functions.

The first attempt to privatize Transco, however, only took place in July 2000 via a public bidding.

But there was apparently not enough interest in the concession to Transco in Singapore Power Ltd. (SingPower) ended up as the only investor to submit a pre-qualification proposal for the concession.

Undaunted, PSALM conducted another public bidding the following month.

This also went up in smoke.

For the second time, SingPower emerged as the only bidder interested in the Transco concession.

Edgardo del Rosario, former Commerce undersecretary and the first president of PSALM, rejected the offer. I think that PSALM has to understand.

Back in 2001, the law was still relatively new and the circumstances seemed too much in favor the appetite of potential investors.

"The lack of a congressional franchise for Transco was a big issue. Another concern involved regulatory issues," he said in an interview.

The regulatory framework was laid out in the law itself. There was a framework in place, but the implementation of that framework was uncertain," he added.

Prospective investors did not have enough clues on which to base revenue forecasts and returns on investment, he said.

The Energy Regulatory Commission back then had yet to come out with comprehensive rules governing minimum allowable revenue and weighted average cost of capital.

"On that basis, SingPower was the only one willing to bid and take the risk," he said.

Apart from those glaring issues, power sector experts who requested anonymity said there were other factors that contributed to the failure of the first two attempts to privatize Transco.

The two-phase bidding method that the government employed at the time, he said, was flawed.

"It leaves much room for legal issues," the source said.

Under the first phase, PSALM will award to the winning concessionaire the transmission franchise, the obligation to operate, maintain, rehabilitate, expand and finance the country's high-voltage transmission grid. Until a congressional franchise is awarded, however, the systems operation functions will remain with the government.

The second phase will only start upon the issuance of a congressional franchise to the concessionaire.

By this time, the winning concessionaire will be the sole transmission provider. Transmission system, including systems operation.

A bonus prospective bidder related that this two-phase system left a lot of room for finger pointing.

"With the two-phase method, a concessionaire will be the set into a situation where they can only perform certain operations. Functions agreed on a three-phase bid, like having a new cut but not being allowed to draw it. Sure, you can take the cut, but somebody else will draw it for you. In that case, the government," the bonus bidder said. "If something goes wrong, who's to blame, the government or the concessionaire? There will be finger pointing."

Forced into the situation

But Makasiang seemed to have been forced to adopt that bidding method, as Congress stood by its position to not issue a transferable franchise for Transco.

"The President sees the issue very well and the urgency of the privatization of the Transco. She knows that something must be done to stop the continuous bleeding of the government as the government had forced the proposals submitted by the private sector, "highly evasive and frustrating."

Oct. 31, 2000—The concessionaire with the highest price offer of $3.3 billion, led by the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (Egat), clinches the deal for "lack of transparency" in coming out with the decision, calling Power's choice as "unacceptable" and warned that the country may turn into "a laughing stock in the international community" because of the selection process.

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Under bidding guidelines, a bidding should be declared a failure if there are fewer than two interested parties.

January 2002—An unnamed Danish company emerges as a challenger to the auction, submitting $1.4 billion in advance more bidders and sparking the private talent process.

June 29, 2004—Before drafting another bidding round, PSALM chairman negotiated bilaterally for the concession contract.

July 2004—Press says that the bidding round likely starts through, after two other foreign firms demonstrate their NGO clout, and World Bank country director.

Grid—also since entered in bidding alongside SingPower.

Sept. 29, 2004—PSALM officials announce bids, say they are "pleased with the quality of the proposals" and that the bids "have the potential to deliver substantial and beneficial benefits."

Oct. 12, 2004—PSALM announces that it has scrapped the bidding "because of the traditional skeptics and... the uncertainties saying that the government had forced the proposals submitted by the private sector, "highly evasive and frustrating."

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May 17, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

May 18, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

May 19, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

May 20, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

May 21, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

May 22, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

May 23, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

May 24, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

May 25, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

May 26, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

May 27, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

May 28, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

May 29, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

May 30, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

May 31, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

June 1, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

June 2, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

June 3, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

June 4, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

June 5, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

June 6, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

June 7, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

June 8, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

June 9, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

June 10, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

June 11, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

June 12, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

June 13, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

June 14, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

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July 1, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

July 2, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

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July 10, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

July 11, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

Under bidding guidelines, a bidding should be declared a failure if there are fewer than two interested parties.

January 2002—An unnamed Danish company emerges as a challenger to the auction, submitting $1.4 billion in advance more bidders and sparking the private talent process.

June 29, 2004—Before drafting another bidding round, PSALM chairman negotiated bilaterally for the concession contract.

July 2004—Press says that the bidding round likely starts through, after two other foreign firms demonstrate their NGO clout, and World Bank country director.

Grid—also since entered in bidding alongside SingPower.

Sept. 29, 2004—PSALM officials announce bids, say they are "pleased with the quality of the proposals" and that the bids "have the potential to deliver substantial and beneficial benefits."

Oct. 12, 2004—PSALM announces that it has scrapped the bidding "because of the traditional skeptics and... the uncertainties saying that the government had forced the proposals submitted by the private sector, "highly evasive and frustrating."

Nov. 15, 2004—The concessionaire with the highest price offer of $3.3 billion, led by the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (Egat), clinches the deal for "lack of transparency" in coming out with the decision, calling Power's choice as "unacceptable" and warned that the country may turn into "a laughing stock in the international community" because of the selection process.

Nov. 15, 2004—After meeting deadline for two-stage process on Sept. 28 and pushing back the auction date to Oct. 20, PSALM identified pre-qualified bidders as the consortium of Tractebel Energy Corp., Malaysia's National Electrical and Mechanical Berhad (Tenaga) and Hongkong Electric Holdings Ltd. and Transco Holdings Corp. and Trans-Grid, Inc. (the group composed of Meralco, Ayala International, and Filipino investors), and Filipino Red Cross.

December 2000—Bidding is reduced to Jan. 15, and then again to Feb. 5.

Feb. 1, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

Feb. 5, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

Feb. 6, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

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Feb. 9, 2001—Bidding deadline is further reset to March 5, and then again to Feb. 8.

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Identity theft a threat, Oracle says

By Dante L. Luna

IDENTITY THEFT IS A GROWING CONCERN for companies globally and in the Philippines as they begin to embrace greater technology for internal operations and to develop web clients.

More importantly, the need for so-called "identity management" services is being driven mainly by the companies' need to satisfy regulatory requirements and the demand of clients for greater security according to information technology firm Oracle Corp.

In a press briefing, Oracle regional director for security solutions Ricardo "Rico" Saint-Cyr said the data breach was so significant that companies world-wide were expected to spend up to $1 billion for identity management systems by 2010.

At the same time, Rena explained that the increase of the threat to the security of corporate information had evolved dramatically over the last decade.

"The threat has intensified, and hacktivist solutions are no longer enough," he said.

The Oracle executive pointed out that while attacks on computer IT infrastructures were often perpetrated by amateur "hackers" in the past, they were now increasingly being conducted by organized crime elements.

Similarly, companies in the past had to struggle only with the enforcement of their websites.

Nowadays, they have to contend with internal personal theft, which is aimed at making almost undamagingly revealed critical information.

On top of desktops with clients, Oracle officials explained that there were also growing issues about how the information is handled within the company, specifically which officers have access to information and to operations.

"This information becomes extremely valuable in the wrong hands," Oracle Philippines chief Francis Ong said.

The IT executives stressed the importance of protecting data by managing access to it, describing potential damage to the company as "horrendous" if they fail to secure it.

"The credibility of a company just goes down the drain because 'you can't protect your clients' information,'" Rena said.

$2B to be spent on protecting info

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Corn facility up in S. Cotabato

By Agustin Z. Zurita
Inquirer Mindanao

KORONADAL CITY—CORN PRODUCTION in South Cotabato is expected to get a boost following the inauguration of a multi-million peso post-harvest facility in Banga town.

South Cotabato is one of the country's leading corn producing areas.

Manasseh Abil, director of the Department of Agriculture in Central Mindanao, said the agency shouldered P1.5 million of the total project cost of P22 million.

The remainder was contributed by the local government.

Abil said Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap led the inauguration last week of the facility, the second of its kind in the region.

The first one was constructed in Kalamansig, North Cotabato and was finished in August last year.

The Banga facility with a total capacity of 200 metric tons, would serve as processing, drying, shelling and marketing center for corn farmers in Banga town and nearby areas.

Abil said the Agriculture department bankrolled the project to further improve the condition of corn farmers.

"We realize that corn farmers continue to criticize us due to the lack of a post-harvest facility. The DA had already developed the necessary technology to increase corn production. Now the DA crew intends to enhance the corn farmers' profitability," Abil said.

As a trading center, farmers can also sell their produce at the facility for higher prices, he said.

Composed with commercial buyers, the government buying price at the trading center is higher by P1 a kilo.

Private grains traders buy yellow corn at P6.50 a kilo and white corn at P6.00.

Abil said the charges for drying, shelling and storage of corn by farmers were already reduced in the DA buying price.

He said that the Agriculture department would also construct a similar facility in Malungon, in nearby Sarangani province.

With the government providing post-harvest facilities, Abil said that corn farmers can now focus on production without worrying about their profit.

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Philamlife Global Bond Fund	1.1882	10.18%

Currimao gets PPA help

By Hanna Lucanosa
Inquirer Northern Luzon

SAN FERNANDO CITY, LA UNION—The Philippine Ports Authority has backed up efforts to upgrade and improve major ports in Northern Luzon to boost tourism in the region.

Topping the PPAs list of port development projects is the construction of a P96-million cruise ship berth and a P20-million passenger terminal that will service international passengers in Currimao, Ilocos Norte.

Cortenas & 27 Kilometers north of Laoag City and local government officials went to develop the port as a transshipment point for goods to Singapore and Hong Kong.

Silverio Mangoseng, PPA port manager, said the projects were approved in January and construction would start this month.

He said the construction of the passenger terminal would be finished in the PPA.

Mangoseng said the Chinese and also recently visited Ilocos Norte had seen the potential of the area as a tourist destination.

"The Chinese, particularly those from Taiwan, are attracted to Ilocos because of its beaches and scenic in Bert Boocardia, Laoag City.

According to Mangoseng, the cheapest mode of transportation for the Chinese to reach Northern Luzon is by boat, and the development of the Currimao port facilities would help bring in more visitors.

The PPA, he said, had allotted P13.1 million for backfilling and revetment construction and P1.8 million for the repair of the old immigration building.

Mangoseng said the PPA had also released P1.3 million for the fencing of the port in Aparri, Cagayan, and more than P22 million for the improvement of the PPA's facilities in this city.

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		219,000	36,163	27,196	21,788	18,844
		269,000	33,618	25,583	20,514	17,888

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RCBC starts overseas roadshow

Bank promotes additional shares offering worth ₱10B

By Doris C. Dienstag

THE PUBLICLY-LISTED Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. will hold a roadshow to key global financial markets—Hong Kong, Singapore, London, New York, Boston and San Francisco—starting this week to drum up investor interest in its additional shares offering worth ₱10 billion.

A team of RCBC officials led by newly appointed CEO Lorenzo Tan will meet with representatives of more than 100 equity fund management groups which are keen on investing in the bank, RCBC said in a statement.

RCBC plans to sell to offshore investors 373.9 million common shares, or 88 percent of its primary shares offering of 217.4 million.

The international roadshow starts today and will end on March 13. The listing on the Philippine Stock Exchange will be on March 20.

The sole bookrunner and international underwriter is CLSA Ltd. While the bank's investment house subsidiary RCBC Capital Corp., serves as the domestic lead underwriter.

In finalizing [illegible] allotment, the total offering may reach 230 million in new common shares.

The offer price will be based on the volume-weighted average price of the RCBC shares on the PSE for a period of 10 to 20 trading days ending on March 15, according to documents filed with the exchange. The price will be subject to a discount of up to 10 percent.

The trading of shares already listed on the PSE will be suspended on March 16, since the offer price has been finalized, until the listing day of the additional shares.

The domestic underwriter's offering period was set for March 19 to 23. A roadshow for local investors held last Friday was the first leg of RCBC's global roadshow.

Underwriter CLSA Ltd., in its review of the bank's fundamentals, said: "The recent appointment of young and dynamic banker Lorenzo V. Tan as CEO guarantees strong leadership for years to come. Ongoing emphasis on marketing and improving asset quality should unlock true potential of the bank."

CLSA also said RCBC would likely rise to be among the country's top five banks in terms of assets by year 2012. RCBC is currently ranked ninth biggest bank.

Outlook for PLDT seen getting brighter

By Rica T. Dichaosina

ANALYSTS SHRUGGED THEIR positive outlook for Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., mainly because of its growing mobile business and diversification into information technology-related services, business process outsourcing, and e-gaming.

"There will be no more rings in favor of PLDT," said Association of Stock Market Analysts of the Philippines director Andrei del Castillo.

Del Castillo said PLDT was expected to post bigger profits for 2006 than the P16 billion net profit and P59 billion in core earnings in 2005. Core earnings exclude the impact of currency fluctuations, deferred taxes and other non-recurring charges.

"The outlook is brighter because of its continued growth in its mobile and landline business, its diversified[?] approach, its resilience in the broadband and outsourcing business," Del Castillo said. "The growth of the telecom industry as a whole and the general improvement in the economy will no doubt give the company a boost as well."

PLDT, partly owned by Hong Kong-based conglomerate First Pacific Co. Ltd., ended 2006 with a record mobile phone subscribers of 24 million, suggesting a added core a million more [illegible] during the fourth quarter. PLDT's wholly-owned subsidiary, Smart Communications, and Smart's listed unit, Pilipino Telephone, closed the third quarter of 2006 with a combined subscriber base of 22.9 million. On March 2, Smart said the combined subscriber base has reached 25 million.

Cellular phone operations accounted for nearly two-thirds of PLDT's group revenues.

A Zambrano-Lim analyst also said PLDT's 30-percent stake in e-gaming company PhilWeb Corp. and its increased activity in business process outsourcing through ePLDT are expected to provide additional income.

Brittany earmarks ₱5B for condo project in Makati

BRITTANY CORP. IS EARMARKING ₱5 billion over the next two years for a property development project in Makati, a high-rise residential-condominium venture, which will be undertaken in partnership with the Lopez family.

"Brittany is acknowledged as the most innovative developer and purveyor of luxury homes. The same expertise we have been known for in developing creative 'lifescapes' for the trailblazing affluent—as seen in our enticing residential projects like Stonehurst, Crestwoods and Brittany Bay—will be applied to our foray in condo development," said Jing Jose Jose, president of Brittany Corp.

The Makati condominium, called The Residence, is primarily residential but with an appropriate mix of commercial establishments to service the needs of its residents.

The 30-storey high-end condominium is being put up on a property in front of Greenbelt 1.

"Homes will have that unique Brittany signature: A fusion of creative ideas coming from the best disciplines in the industry. It will be the first true-designer condo in the country and the first high-end condo that applies the concept of creativity, where units within the condominium are sensitively and tastefully planned with specific operations in mind," Jose explained.

With Brittany Corp.'s track record in high-end horizontal residential developments, she was confident that the upscale market would be receptive to its offering.

"The competitive environment in Makati seems to be daunting and stiff. One would think it would be more difficult to sell in Makati given the number of developers in the area. But the local market has evolved over the years. They are now more selective than way back in the 90s. These days, the market puts a premium on design and is on the look out for creative financing schemes. So it's really not as different as entering in the Metro South. The base is also wider and more diverse which Brittany can capitalize on as it will expand our market reach. With Manila, we have more young urban professionals, expatriates and local investors," she added.

The Manila Business says, is only just the beginning. Greater plans are expected to unfold within the next two years.

"The Brittany will be bringing more unique condo concepts within the year, not only in Makati but also in other key commercial and business districts in Manila," Serrano concludes.

Sale of more PNOC-EDC ...

See page B-3

party involved in the development and production of various forms of energy resources in the Philippines.

PNOC-EDC operates geothermal energy projects in Leyte, Luzon, Negros and Mindanao with a total installed capacity of 1,166 megawatts. It is also the only active developer of hydroelectric energy and geothermal power projects in the country and at present accounts for about 60 percent of the total installed geothermal energy capacity in the Philippines.

PNOC-EDC said it has set a capital expenditure budget of P2.98 billion for 2007, according to its prospectus filed with the Philippine Stock Exchange.

Of the planned spending, P1.10 billion will go to the first phase of its North Luzon wind power project in Ilocos Norte.

The first phase of the wind power project, which is estimated to produce 20 megawatts of electricity, is expected to be completed by the first quarter of 2009 and will be partly financed by the Japanese government under a special yen loan package worth 5.837 billion yen. Phase 1 is expected to contribute 57 gigawatt hours of electricity annually, which would be equivalent to annual crude oil savings of $6.7 million [or $6/a barrel].

Geograce taps JPMorgan as financial adviser

GEOGRACE, A LISTED MINING EXPLORATION firm, signed a financial advisory agreement with international investment house and financial advisor JPMorgan in relation to Itoni's portfolio of mining investments.

The development a day after JP Morgan officials led by managing director Jim Gerard Sandejas met Orchard gold resources-cobre-investment and Natural Resources Secretary Angelo Reyes.

In an interview, JPMorgan officials said they were seeing bright prospects for the Philippine mining industry, noting that the right policy framework to attract foreign investments in the Philippines is now in place.

Orchard noted that the global commodities market was enjoying record prices of nickel and that the Philippines has nickel in abundance, aside from gold and copper.

He said "there is a widespread interest in the Philippines as a haven for investments. JP Morgan is currently considering financing a couple of projects here."

Geograce's nickel investment portfolio includes those in Zambales, Bukidnon and Tabaoran.

"We are now in the process of doing geological rapid assessment and soil sampling in various areas in the country. To date, reports indicate sizable amounts of minerals which we are very happy about," according to senior geologist and director Jun Marquez of Geograce.

"The signing of JPMorgan with us confirms our reports and findings," Abalgar said.

RP needs investor-friendly rules on cross-border deals

TAN IN CHINA'S BOOMING HOTEL INDUSTRY
The 48-story Grand Hyatt in Shanghai's Pudong District marked tycoon Lucio C. Tan's entry into the booming hotel and tourism industry in China. Grand Hyatt Shanghai, which opened on Friday, is the first of the seven all-hotel projects planned by the Tiong group in China.

Move to make forex lib more meaningful

By Doris C. Dumlao

US-BASED FINANCIAL GIANT Citigroup says the need for the Philippines to follow up recent foreign exchange liberalization initiatives with more investor-friendly rules on cross-border capital transactions.

In a Feb. 26 commentary, Citigroup said, "Since the local regulators would craft the implementing rules and regulations on the easing of the outward flow of capital would be important to ensuring policy credibility."

"Higher limits on some capital account transactions do not necessarily remove the roadblocks to facilitating the ease of outward investments of residents or dollar purchases for transactions without documents," the bank said.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas will raise starting April 2 the amount of dollars that banks are unobliged to share with investors from 25 percent of unimpaired capital or $5 million, whichever is lower, to a pre-Asian crisis ratio of 30 percent or $10 million, including subsidiaries.

The BSP will also double the cap on offshore investments that residents can pursue without approval to $1 million, while the limit on retail purchases of foreign exchange for non-trade (service) purposes such as for offshore travel, education or medical expenses was also doubled to $10,000 from $5,000.

"Generous in the Philippines, laws or circulars suggest fairly liberal guarantees to engage in cross border transactions, but the manner in which these legislations are enforced seem to be another layer of restriction," Citigroup said.

An example includes restrictions applied to a foreign mutual fund the same private sector proposal earlier approved to buy the same investment grade securities," it noted.

Citigroup said the supporting documents required for administer to process an application, such as for outward investments, should be limited to the minimum essentials.

"Consistent with the policy intent to relax some rules on capital transactions, the approved process including submission of documents should be as process-friendly as possible," it said.

Despite the higher limit on outward investments, Citigroup said there was no indication of seeing pent-up onshore demand for foreign currency assets among retail and institutional investors.

It said the banking system's foreign currency deposit units (FCDUs) had accommodated much of the retail demand for foreign currency assets.

"An improving financial system and a policy environment that nurtured financial risk also contributed to strong dollar deposits," it said.

These FCDU deposits, sourced as an overall layer of the country's foreign reserves, amounted to $18.2 billion at end-September 2006, up by 15.6 percent over a year ago.

Because of these FCDU deposits, Citigroup said the higher limit for retail dollar purchases would not likely result in a capital flight.

"FCDU gains under the more liberal rules on acquisition from retail effectively substitutes for BSP's spot market purchases to remain exchange appreciation. Thus, we think BSP will not have to undertake costly sterilization (mopping up of money supply) operations to prevent any explosion in liquidity from its spot purchases that may lead to asset price bubbles," it said.

Citigroup also hopes that the higher limit of $10 million for outward investment by residents could distract banks and non-financial corporations from diversifying away from investment grade Philippine foreign currency sovereign bonds (RFBMs).

Transco power delivery up

By Abigail L. Ho

KEPCO-RUN NATIONAL TRANSmission Corp. (Transco) registered a 6 percent increase in power delivery to 109,220.4 megawatt-months (MW-months) in 2006 from 102,861.8 MW-months in the previous year.

Power delivery in MW-months refers to the sum of Transco's monthly billing demands for the year.

In a statement, Transco president and chief executive Arthur Aquilan attributed the increase in delivery boost to the completion of several critical transmission projects all over the country.

These projects include the San Simon-San Manuel 230kilovolt (kV) project in Luzon, the 460 mega-volt-ampere (MVA) transformer in the Visayas before and the second phase of the Bolo-agan substation expansion project for the Luzon-based Transmission Project in the Visayas, and the Abuja-Marawi 69-kV line 2 project in Mindanao.

"We will do all we can to complete our expansion and capacity addition projects nationwide to further improve power delivery to our customers," Aquilan said.

According to Transco's transmission planning group, power delivered to the Luzon grid totaled 78,412.0 MW-months, 3.8 percent higher than the 76,190.2 MW-months transmitted in 2005.

RP-Taiwan trade rose 2% in '06

By Bernie W. Dominguez

TRADE BETWEEN THE PHILIPPINES AND Taiwan increased by 1.87 percent to about US$7.26 billion in 2006 amid continuing efforts to establish a seamless link between their respective economies.

Data from Taiwan's Government Information Office or GIO showed that Taipei bought from the Philippines last year some $5.38 billion worth of goods, including computers. This sum, however, is 0.60 percent less or than the $5.76 billion posted in 2005.

Taiwanese goods sent to the Philippines, including computers, reached $1.90 billion, increasing by 3.69 percent from year-ago level.

In last year's trading, Taiwan maintained a surplus of about $1.7 billion, increasing by about 11.66 percent from $1.53 billion in 2005.

GIO also reported that the Philippines was Taiwan's 11th largest trading partner in 2006, accounting for 1.7 percent of the island economy's total global trade for the year, which was valued at $426.17 billion.

Among developing economies excluding mainland China, the Philippines was Taiwan's 5th largest trade partner after Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Thailand and Indonesia.

China is Taiwan's largest trading partner with a 17.8 percent share of the latter's aggregate trade in terms of value.

In 2006, the Philippines was the 11th largest destination of Taiwanese exports with 2 percent of total outbound shipments valued at $2.64 billion.

The country rank 16th among the largest sources of Taiwan's imports, accounting for about 1.37 percent of total inbound shipments worth $192.46 billion.

Manila and Taipei signed in December 2006 a memorandum of agreement to establish a growth corridor that links the Kaohsiung-Taipei area in southwestern Taiwan to the Subic and Clark special economic centers in northern Philippines.

Economic officials from both governments are looking into the details of how the corridor would be realized, particularly through their yearly bilateral meeting last held in December.

Taiwan's Council of Labor Affairs agreed to allow 90-day visa for 10,000 workers who want to undergo training there, providing leeway for Filipinos who normally would have to secure an employment contract of up to one years before they could enter Taiwan.

URC spending $5M for Nestlé deal

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

UNIVERSAL ROBINA CORP. (URC), the branded snacks food and beverage firm of the Gokongwei, is spending about $5 million to acquire the assets of Nestlé Waters Philippines.

The asset sell help URC expand its share of the rapidly growing beverage market in the country.

The two companies earlier entered into an agreement providing for the sale of Nestlé assets to the Gokongwei firm. The deal will take effect on April 2.

Under the agreement, Nestlé Waters will sell its land and mineralized water Hidden Spring trademark to URC.

URC will also get the license to bottle Nestlé Pure Life, which will remain a brand by itself.

Nestlé domestic communications Pedro De Lisaso told the investors that Nestlé's water business "has not performed as expected." He pointed the company is still in arena in URC subsidy, according to Nestlé people, but the unit competence is bottled beverages.

Nestlé Waters will focus on its core businesses, including milk, coffee, food and other beverages, De Lisaso said.

URC, for its part, has agreed to hire the majority of the factory-based Nestlé Waters employees to ensure continuity of operations.

Nestlé Waters Philippines will pay all employees a separation package as provided by company policy and the existing collective bargaining agreement.

With the acquisition, URC will expand its portfolio of non-carbonated brands which now include coffee (Great Taste), green tea drinks (C2), sports drinks (Inuit) and juices (Nature's Harvest).

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GOINGS-ON

Marketing confab set

THE BEST BRANDS IN MAKING THEIR MARK! SALES WILL DEPEND ON MARCH 21 to discuss the latest information, trends and insights on the industry at the 3rd Market Masters Conference: Brand and Trade Initiatives to Maximize Growth at Dusit Hotel, Makati City.

Among the marketing speakers are: Josiah Go, chief merchandising strategist of Mannequin and Fashion Inc., who will discuss the Blue Ocean Strategy; Ronnie Gomez, category director for marketing training, Goldmine Philippines; Teresa Pineda of Splash Holdings; Rosella De Gal, managing director of ACCMarket Philippines; Wilson Lee of Mannequin; Wilma Gaw Tiaoqui-Redfield; and Joanne Lim of Watsonman Supermarket.

The one-day confab is organized by Mannequin and Fashion Inc. Media partners are the Philippine Daily Inquirer and Business World, with Mercedes as AV partner.

ICT-savvy youth

THE UNIVERSITY of the East College of Computer Studies and Systems (UECCSS) celebrated its 10th Foundation Anniversary on Feb. 28 March 2 through the "10th UECCS Week with the theme "Empowering the Youth Throughout."

The week's activities will include the launch of Windows Vista, seminars on the "Most Common Active Networking Devices," "Web Environment" and "3D Studio Max," and the latest trends in technology with guest speakers from leading ICT firms.

The ICT Week also featured different ICT contests like "Geek Rules," which uses an automated answering system.

Greenplum Asia Pacific

GREENPLUM, maker of the world's leading commercial open source database for business intelligence and data warehousing, said Brad Main-Hollands is regional headquarters in Singapore and hired Lindsay Lorman Vice-Samson as its general manager for Asia Pacific.

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Editor Aries Espinosa

BPIFSB runs for the Filipino family

RUNNING IS ONE OF THE BEST things you can do to improve your health and it's good for your family, too. "Active parents sleep regularly and have more energy so they can spend more quality time with their families," explains PCapt. Antonio S. Nazo, ORE, senior adviser of the Runners Confederation of the Philippines. As (FirstPD) and one of the main organizers of the Second National Bible Marathon held recently.

The enthusiastic atmosphere of the marathon was a warm welcome to the families that attended the event, which featured fun, 5km, 10km, and 21km legs. BPI Family Savings Bank, one of the main sponsors, awarded a Go Starter Savings Account worth P5,000 to each of the families that completed the race together as a group.

Perfect for growing families, the Go Starter Savings Account comes with a life insurance benefit computed in five times the actual balance, up to P1 million. This means that the more you save, the higher your insurance coverage. The accounts also comes with an Express Teller ATM card for convenient access anytime through any of the 2,000 Express Teller, Expressnet and MegaLink ATM networks.

The Sarmo family from Subic also received a slew of awards. Thirteen-year-old Jayanjan finished the 5km leg at third place, while her eleven-year-old sister Danika finished fourth in the 5km run. Their cousin, Mitzi Ann, placed fifth in the 5km marathon. "We're three generations of runners," beams the family patriarch, Frank Sarmo, a World War II veteran.

Aside from handing out Go Starter savings accounts at special prices, BPI Family Savings Bank also handed out gift baskets to all of the families that participated in the event.

BPI family Savings Bank actively supports events like the National Bible Marathon because it strongly believes in keeping families together. This is why BPI family Savings Bank offers a wide range of financial tools to help Filipino families grow together and get the most out of life.

CITIBANK SAVINGS OPENS SINONDO BRANCH

Citibank Savings recently opened a new branch in Sinondo located at 489 Quintin Paredes Street. The branch opening brings world-class banking and hard-to-find products and services down to the growing Filipino-Chinese market. The opening coincided with another milestone as Citibank Savings is now a proud partner of Tatong Bayot Nos Ex Events, a campaign spearheaded by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) and the Department of Education (DepEd) that aims to raise funds for public elementary schools. As leading people to donate their money. The BSP campaign also aims to raise awareness and encourage the public to accept and use coins regularly, to keep them in circulation. Among the Sinondo branch opening were (from left): Chinatown Mgr. Mitzi Flores, Citibank N.A. Country Business Manager and Citibank Savings Head Hari Manik Jones, BSP corporate affairs director Fredie Gue, Citibank Savings Binondo branch manager Lesley Lee and Citibank Savings president Jeffrey Chiu.

Superbrands recognition for Eng Bee Tin

GOBBY CUA, OWNER OF ENG BEE Tin, has all the reasons to be merry this Chinese New Year. Aside from being one of the most sought-after wedding celebrants of the Chinese New Year, Eng Bee Tin recently garnered a distinct recognition from Superbrands Philippines which has been known as a credible and dependable measure for standard of excellence and quality in products and services.

"We are very grateful for the recognition. Our hard work paid off for this is a testament to the best and healthiest food option for our customers. Now, we have to work extra hard to maintain this status," shared Gobby Cua.

For almost 50 years in the food industry, Eng Bee Tin is considered to be the home of the best hopia and tikoy in the country. Ask anyone where you can get a scrumptious dish of hopia and other Chinese delicacies, they will surely head you to Binondo and Eng Bee Tin has set a benchmark in China town and has captured the taste not only of Chinese, but Filipinos, as well.

MAJOR sponsor Eng Bee Tin's Gerry Chua hands out gifts worth at the suburban customers of Ultra Mall. © BEE China, ahead of the ensuing celebration of the Chinese New Year (Tomorrow, 8-noon). Eng Bee Tin specializes hopia, tikoy and other delicacies are locally available to enjoy as permanents, groceries, and restaurants customers of the company's export products to customers in Asia, the Middle East, Europe and the United States.

Eng Bee Tin boasts of its latest addition to its prime line of hopia products: the hopia mongo Lite, Tikoy Lite and Ube Tikoy Lite.

Superbrands is an independent arbiter of branding. The Superbrands organization was originally set up to confer worthy a decade ago, achieve it published the first Superbrands book. Since then, it has expanded to operations in 21 countries worldwide, in process, Superbrands has launched four volumes of the book. This book will be used as reference to the Asian region and to the standard of excellence and quality in its products and services.

GMA NETWORK BAGS TWO ANVIL AWARDS

GMA Network, Inc.'s Integrated Year Review of Most (2006) GMA Annual Report and GMA Fantastic 60 Integrated Anniversary Communication Plan) in this recently held Anvil Awards, the most coveted and most exalted award for public relations practice in the Philippines. Pictured during the Anvil Award of Merit for its 2006 Fantastic 60 Integrated Anniversary Communication Plan. GMA's associate creative director Amelie Herrera (center) and (to her right) VP for human resources Dodie Mendoza gamely posse with 42nd Anvil Awards chairman Rudolf D. Raquel APR, Myla Villanueva and Leonides Salonoga, members of the board of governors.

CONSULAR CORPS MONTHLY MEETING

The Consular Corps of the Philippines held its 1st monthly meeting at the Captains Bar of the Manila Pavilion Grand Hotel, Makati Avenue, Makati City Jan. 31. Shown are (from left) Richard B. Haynes, Dean, Consular Corps of the Philippines, Consul General, Embassy of the United States of America, Evie Osera, Consul a.i. Consulate of the Republic of Togo, Emilio Emilio Gimenez, Consular Officer, Consulate of the Republic of Togo, guest speaker, Her Excellency Kristina A. Kenney, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Embassy of the United States of America and Maria Elena Zaldivar, consul a.i. Consulate of Panama, and Angelito "Lito" B. Santandreu.

Compact water station, chlorine-free pools

THE UHP-500 MINERAL WATER BOTtling station is manufactured and sold by Ebenezaurus Inc. for only P150,000. This high-capacity 12,000 gallons per day), high-purity, maximum reliability water refilling station uses ozone-ultraviolet-activated carbon multi-stage microprocessor. Ozone kills germs and bacteria 3000 times better than chlorine. The unit is complete with pumps, stainless tanks, ultraviolet germicidal lamp, carbon, multi-stage microprocessor filters and is installed in only 48 hours. Ozonation system.

The UHP-500 costs only 20 centavos per gallon to operate, and doesn't generate any backwash nor maintenance unlike the reverse osmosis type. The UHP-500's size is 4 feet x 5 feet x 6 feet and comes fully assembled, and never needs sodium chemicals or negative ion/ozone free.

The system is perfect for business or private consumption: camps, churches, cooperatives, factories, schools, hospitals, offices, resorts, and hotels. It is ideal for groups or individuals who wish to save on money by producing their own safe drinking water.

The UHP-500 can also be used to treat water for swimming pools and swimming pools. Don't serve more chlorine and dangerous muriatic acid, and you'll enjoy chemical-free, environment-friendly water safe for you and your family. For more information, log on to ozonedevices.com, or call 331-6782 or 335-9060.

ELECTRONICS UHP-500 water station

WHARTON-PENN CLUB OF THE PHILIPPINES ELECTS NEW OFFICERS

Current board members of the Wharton Penn Club of the Philippines Antonio Ventosa (right), Lay Bagtas, Jun Jon Villanueva, Richard Santos, Monica Mercado and Rudy Ang (from left) welcomed the newly elected Club officers and directors for 2007. Felino Peralta, Kenneth Ng, Fernando Pangilinan (second to the right), and Vivian Cendaña were also welcomed as members of the Wharton Penn Club Board. For 2007, Antonio, who is a graduate of corporate finance at accounting from Pamantasan ng Araullo, will serve as club president, while Kenneth Ng will serve as corporate secretary. The Wharton Club has lined up a range of activities for the business community. Down the line, the Wharton Club will also host corporate talks and fellowships with key business leaders. For more information about the club and its upcoming activities, call 16-6000 ext. 3 or e-mail whartonpennclub@yahoo.com.

REVIEW OF MFI-CENTRO ILIS ACCORD

Officials of MFI Foundation (formerly Mercado Foundation) and the microbusiness Centro ILIS met recently to assess the achievements of their pro-poor project to improve the education and employment opportunities for the 14-25 year youth and the training of teachers with support from the Sultan Kitchen of Singapore. Shown in photo is coastal from left): Lydia L. Mendoza, VP for finance, MFI; Merlin Faruqui Jr., representative, Lance ILIS; Col. Alex T. Peralta, MFI president; Dr. Rodolfo Magbitang, Philippine representative, Centro ILIS; and Rhonda S. Santos, head, MFI Training and Certification.

JOLLIBEE EXPRESS DELIVERY

Jollibee pushes the limits with delivery. It recently launched its 30-minute Jollibee Express Delivery through expansion of Jollibee delivery motorcycles in the Luzon area. Jollibee delivers wide array of food choices including iconic desserts and crispy Jollibee fries. For delivery, dial 631-1000 and order your favorite meal plus eat-by snack or meal.

Load up with Thule

WHAT BETTER TWO IS THERE TO COMPLEment the rugged and aggressive looking Subaru Forester than a Thule load system carrier? Designed to make traveling more convenient and pleasurable for your family. There's line of roof racks and load carriers are geared to wants active individuals and families who like to explore the great outdoors. Thule provides you with the solution to maximize the load capacity of your car. Be it Thule's locally manufactured load carriers, Thule has an easy step on, step off feature which lets you install the load carriers with ease.

Thule load systems is guaranteed safe from rust, no drilling required and is wind tunnel tested to aerodynamically compliment the exterior design of any vehicle. Thule's line of load carriers are 100 percent stainless made from the finest and has passed the four seasons test of the ISO. Thule is the only accredited OEM designer in the load market and is a proud supplier of load carriers for brands such as Audi, Volvo, Land Rover, Nissan, Toyota, GM, BMW, Subaru and Mercedes-Benz.

All Thule roof racks and boxes are theft proof and water proof, which makes your personal effects safe even during the rainy season. The aerodynamic designs provides a sleek look to the vehicle. Above is the Subaru Forester equipped with a Thule roof mounted rack system. For more information on how to gear up and make your vacation a more adventurous one, load up and visit the Subaru/Thule display at the Metro Image Showroom along Edsa or at the Thule ISO Showroom in Ortigas Avenue (744-6367) and Boracay Tunes (393-7947), or log on to www.thule.com.

RITM 6th postgraduate course March 15

THE RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR TROPICAL Medicine (Research Department and Training Institute) 6th Postgraduate Course in Infectious and Tropical Diseases titled "Highlights, Headlines and Hot Zones" on March 15 and 16 at the RITM Auditorium, Filinvest, Alabang, Muntinlupa City. List of challenging topics to be handled by Dr. Cynthia Gloriabelle Dungca, expert from the University of Massachusetts Medical Center and Dr. Jennifer Sandoval, immunology expert from the Centers of Disease Control, Atlanta. Other topics to be discussed are current management guidelines, seasonal and bird flu, travel medicine, update on vaccines and rabies management, herbal medicine and its application to infectious diseases and laboratory sessions and elementary tests. Also, course is open to rural doctors, nurses, medical technologists. For more information, call Medical Department at 807-8600 or 807-2600.

Creating happy memories with Jollibee Kids' Party

MOMENTOUS OCCASIONS SUCH AS birthdays, graduation, and other celebrations are among children's most cherished memories. Make them even more memorable by spending them at their favorite place – Jollibee, where families and friends always share the happiest times. Jollibee Kids' Party offer exciting themes, a longlasting menu selection, superior party amenities, and friendly rates to make any childhood celebration an exciting and enjoyable experience for kids and parents alike. Just choose a party package and let Jollibee handle the rest.

Each Jollibee Kids' Party can be customized to suit children's preferences. Jollibee's newest party theme – Justice League keepsake choices comes for the coolest of kids. This latest theme guarantees a truly "super" time with heroes Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, The Martian Manhunter, The Flash, Green Lantern, and Hawkgirl. Just like any Jollibee Kids' Party, the Justice League package comes with game prizes, guestbooks, balloons, and other party favors. Guests will also enjoy a special appearance of Jollibee.

Apart from Justice League, kids can pick from other themes. They can join the Jimmy Party and have a surprise time, look for hidden fortune on a Treasure Adventure Party, or explore their love for animals with the Zoo Party.

What's a party without the Lang Sarap Jollibee delights? Your food packages, all inclusive of regular soft drinks, are offered for as low as P2,750 good for 20 kids. Pipo's Package includes Jolly Spaghetti, Jolly Crispy Fries, and Jolly Crunch Twist, while Mr. Yum's Package has additional Regular Yum. Hetty's Package includes Burger Steak Supersized and Jollibee Sundae, and Twirlie's Package has the Chickenjoy Supersized and Jollibee Sundae. Those who want a more specialized menu can enjoy Jollibee's Mix-N-Match Package.

With food, venue, decorations, entertainers, and other party details already arranged, a Jollibee Kids' Party helps you focus on things that matter. Complete with all the ingredients needed to make special occasions unforgettable, a child's party at Jollibee can make memories last a lifetime.

SEARCH FOR OUTSTANDING PHILIPPINE SOLDIERS

Former Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Chief Gen. Narciso Abaya (Ret.) (second from left), joins four other distinguished personalities as members of the final board of judges in the Search for The Outstanding Philippine Soldiers (Topas) for 2006. Shown members of the board (from left) Gen. Abaya, Fr. Joaquin Bernas, S.J., Ret. C.J. Hilario Davide, Jr., and Senator Edgardo J. Angara, Ph.D., chairman of the Philippine Veterans Bank. Fr. Bernas, president of the Ateneo de Manila University, is also chairman of the Board of Judges. Gen. Abaya is the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Search for The Outstanding Philippine Soldiers (Topas) for 2006. Shown in the background are Lt. Gen. Efren Abu, AFP Chief of Staff, Senator Angara, and Lt. Gen. Roy Kyamko, AFP Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel (J1). The search for the Topas awardees is a joint undertaking of the Philippine Veterans Bank, the Philippine Jaycees, the Philippine Veterans Bank Employees Association, the Philippine Veterans Bank Officers Association, the Philippine Veterans Bank Retirees Association, the Philippine Veterans Bank Alumni Association, the Philippine Veterans Bank Foundation, Inc., the Philippine Veterans Bank Multi-Purpose Cooperative, the Philippine Veterans Bank Credit Cooperative, and the Philippine Veterans Bank Employees Union.

Quality and affordability with Brother's MyHome Series

BROTHER INTERNATIONAL PHILIPPINES, A leader in home and business IT peripherals is very proud on the release of the latest send/print station inkjet all-in-one's for the home. The very performance Multi Function Center line up is uniquely designed to cater the modern home multi-tasker.

Incorporating the functions of a printer, fax machine, copier, scanner, card reader, PictBridge functions is what MyHome Series offers.

MyHome Series comprises three 4-in-1s: DCP-130C, DCP-330C, and DCP-540CN – (user friendly LCD, MFC-240C. A very comprehensive line up that is an user error- catering to the diverse and unique needs of each user.

With advanced hardware and software enhancements of the new inkjet machines coupled with new range of genuine consumables, true-to-life printing can be achieved with every single print. Plus, it must be a hassle for you to save your pictures using your laptops or personal computers because the MyHome Series could let you print directly from the printer through its PictBridge functions and its Flash Memory Card Slots.

Brother incorporated the amazing 1.5 Gplus Ink Jet printer technology specially tuned only in high-end inkjet all in-ones, to close ink droplet gaps. When used with Innobella Ink & Paper, printouts will have less graininess, greater sharpness and finer definition.

MyHome Series is now available in all Brother Authorized Dealers. For more information you can call Brother Helpdesk at 451-9899 or through our toll free line at 1-800-10-8807-BTR.

Bits Clips

The Body and Mind Wellness Series in Manila

DISCOVER AND EXPERIENCE A special gateway to body and mind wellness as a series range of healing trainings, meditations and energy setting, offered by Manila Darling www.manilaDarling.com, the initiative will be conducted by Sydney Brown Sahya founder and master healer Deepak Nambiar in Sunnyvale hilltop, Makati City from March 16 to 18. The series is composed of meditation, guided meditations and exercises that will focus on the body healing, mind activation which are oriented towards higher spiritual growth. The methods on offer can heal acute or chronic diseases, body ailments, stress and tensions, emotional and mental disturbances, karmic blocks, relationships, attractions and work objects. For inquiries, contact Kanchan Sadhwani (0917-7812885, Ashwini Bajaj (0917-6228809), Prof. Jacquelin (0917-8489506) and Ajeti Morjani (0927-3007311) or visit www.freshmanila.com.

FDR Memorial School 60th year

FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT MEMORIAL School in Angat, Bulacan shall celebrate its Diamond Jubilee (60th Anniversary) on April 28. "This is the time when they will meet their old friends and the association of the school will be reunited to promote the alumni. Please come and join this important event. You may contact Cecilia Sayo - Digal (0946941-1433 or 0917-3017748), Rolando Garay (0915-3178572), Antonio Imperial Hapunan - (0921-7016992, Angeline Justin Ortigas - (0946911-4082 or 09 19 - 7834883.

An art exhibit for a cause

TINGIN KAMI MGA OBSESS (TINTING) IS A multi-disciplinary graphic design studio based in the Philippines, which aspires to make a lasting mark on contemporary art and contribute to the arts and visual landscape. Bringing this vision a notch higher, they present " The Hands That Feed: An Exhibit for a Cause", a 3-day artwork exhibit. This event will be held on March 12-14, at the Fun Factory, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig. Featured are contemporary artists of different expertise but with a common mission of supporting the feeding program for the children in Payatas and Buenos overpool of Quezon City. The proceeds of the 3-day exhibit shall be used to fund the said feeding programs. For more information contact Carmi Martinez-Cenon at carmi@tingin.com.ph, Rhandee Javier at 449-561-81, mobile 0917-4060202, e-mail: fatima_arlandelbarganio@yahoo.com.ph.

26th Annual Chest Confab

THE PHILIPPINE COLLEGE OF CHEST PHYSICIANS will hold its 26th Annual Chest Convention on March 8-9 at Sun Valley Philippine Plaza. This year's theme, "Synergy and Integration in Chest Medicine," highlights the latest developments in pulmonology, cardiology, critical care, and allied specialties involved in the field of chest medicine. One day, registration fee sponsored over-seas delegates are offered on this last day which will accommodate specialty issues like TB and asthma during pregnancy, lung malignancies, pre-operative pulmonary clearance, and other important topics of interest in medicine care. For inquiries, contact the PCCP Secretariat, tel. nos. (632)634-8304, telefax no. (632)634-0163, e-mail - pccp@pldt.net.

The sweet truth about honey

HONEY CONTAINS A VARIETY OF ANTIOXIDANTS and phenolic acids which act as antioxidants, scavenging and eliminating free radicals. It's easy to enjoy the benefits of honey. Combine a honey diet and its therapy, created a partnership with Sweet Tech Inc. consultant at the nutritional and honey and sale is now great tasting food. Moreover, daily consumption of honey raises blood levels of protective antioxidant compounds in humans. This is according to research presented at the 2006 meeting of the American Chemical Society in San Francisco, California. On the other hand, quality-tested pure says cells offer many nutritional benefits by lowering one's risk of developing heart disease and certain types of cancers and promotes safety, antiperspirant components and weight management. So, reach for a Spoonful of Honey Tea! Look and Whatever the sweet truth of honey and the goodness of sale is one brand.

Speechpower consultant is a UP-ICW fellow for drama

DR. DR. RESTITUTO C. DE CASTRO, WHO HAS CERTIFIC names Jose Dennis C. Rodriguez as a fellow for drama in the forthcoming 40th UP-ICW National Writers Workshop to be held at UP Los Baños, Laguna, May 7 to 11. Rodriguez, a Speechpower consultant is a senior consultant at Speechpower, the country's top communication training center. He authored books in public speaking and leadership training and designed modules for language proficiency tests like the IELTS, TOEFL, TOEIC, SAT, GRE, GMAT, teacher aides and oral written communication.

MWSS : CELEBRATING 119 YEARS OF SERVICE

The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) vows to fast track the implementation of its plans and programs in order to achieve an improved supply of potable water for Metro Manila in time with its 119th anniversary. In its speech during the anniversary program, MWSS Vice Chair Lisa Corpuz stated that the Society of MWSS should take employees and all those concerned appreciate the role of MWSS. He also emphasized that the institution's mandate is to strictly monitor and regulate the performance of the water concessionaires. Therefore, administrator Lorenzo R. Jimenez who is only 34 days old as MWSS urged the support of everyone to let Manilenos see more forward to attaining its goals. Jimenez intends to hasten the realization of long term programs geared towards the establishment of alternative sources of water.

BOYSEN PACIFIC PAINTS JOINS WORLDBEX

Unfolding building re-investments and construction excellence in the country, WorldBex Services International (WSI) and Boysen Pacific Paints prepare to gather for this much awaited Chic Philippine World Building and Construction Exposition (WorldBex 2007), happening on March 14-18, at the World Trade Center and an adjoining air-conditioned tent, owned the Philippine Trade Training Center, Space Reading. Be part from this one-from-only activity! Francisco Ramadiz (WSI) executive director, PBS founding chair Joseph Ang and Boysen Cortes, marketing manager for Boysen. For more information, you may contact (WSI at (632)527-4200, 524-2851, and 527-6314 or e-mail at info@worldbex.com.

WESTERN UNION LAUNCHES REWARDS CARD

The Western Union Gold Card loyalty program introduces customers to a world of privileges, with two tiers of rewards – basic and premium benefits. Customers get exclusive access to benefits such as discounts at Western Union's accredited establishments such as Citi... Establishments like Philippines, ABC and Cinema Store. From left: Portia Chong of the Philippines, Tessa Rapp of ING, Pinky Yap of SunMedia, Irene Romero, Patricia Fibigan, Shaheen Hasnani of Western Union, David Southwick Ewart's Tattoo and Ralph Dayrit of ABC joins after the unveiling of the Gold Card.

SPEED-TECH ULTIMATE RIDE

The ride is on for the Speed-Tech Ultimate Ride X-Force Racing Quest launched at the UPTI Cyber Education Challenge Racing Campaign 2006 – 2007. Shown in the contest signing between Speed-Tech Video Games Marketing Corp. and Speed-Tech Sound Corp. Photo shown (standing from left) Kevin Yu sales assistant for speed-tech Sound Corp.,

BUSINESS

Gov't eyes ₱40B for infra projects

Removal of fiscal perks

By Dave C. Dantes

BELTRAN

THE GOVERNMENT EXPECTS to free up as much as ₱40 billion in funds for infrastructure spending each year from its proposed program to streamline fiscal incentives.

Finance Undersecretary Gil Beltran told reporters that the estimated gain was based on a study of actual tax incentives foregone each year from 2000 to 2006 under the existing framework, a tightening of which would thus give fiscal managers more elbow room since the rationalization bill has been approved by Congress.

The Department of Finance is hoping that discussions on the bill would resume as soon as the members of the next Congress take their oath and convene after the elections.

"We're going to limit the granting of income (tax) holidays and eventually phase it out completely," Beltran said.

Based on the trade department's estimate, there are now about 5,000 registered enterprises with unexpired income tax holiday perks.

Under the fiscal incentive rationalization framework supported by the DOF, the tax perks would be limited to the export sector and to investments in less developed areas of the country.

Likewise, all enterprises will pay the value-added tax (VAT) and duties but they will be allowed to recover these once they ship out their goods for export.

"We'll set up a trust fund so everyone can get their money back," Beltran said.

As part of efforts to streamline fiscal incentives, the Bureau of Internal Revenue has signed separate memoranda of agreement with the Board of Investments and the Philippine Economic Zone Authority to plug "disturbing" loopholes in the country's fiscal incentive system by investors.

The agreements provide for a tighter framework in the monitoring and release of fiscal incentives, particularly for income tax holiday and the 5 percent tax on gross income, in order to safeguard the government's fiscal gains.

After having slashed its budget deficit from ₱148.5 billion in 2005 to an eight-year low of ₱62.2 billion in 2006, the national government believes it is on track to meet an aggressive goal of a balanced budget by 2008.

Secure fiscal gains are expected to allow the government to invest an additional ₱260 billion over the next four years to build infrastructure and to improve social services such as education.

For this year, the plan is to help raise the competitiveness of the Mindanao agribusiness region by investing about ₱5 billion to build the Lagusnilogan and Butuan airports, access roads to Bi-Mo (toll-ex, toll-ell) ports and the Iligan–Davao coastal road.

The 8th Deadly Sin.

THE NEW IMPREZA WRX offers you an elevated drive performance unlike any other in its class. This handsome powerhouse features a sleek new grille, with surrounding curves and sweeping hood. Looking beneath the surface is a brand new 2.5L turbo engine, which spirals with sheer horsepower while delivering improved fuel efficiency. When combined with Subaru's legendary Boxer engine and symmetrical AWD system, the new WRX displays smooth road handling, more dynamics and stability under any road condition. Meet the new Impreza WRX in its latest and most potent guise ever.

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BUSINESS Monday
Business Features Editor Margie Quiogue-Espino

LCD Wall Projector

AIM retools to improve its grades

Tweaks curriculum amid weak enrollment; to introduce more short courses

By Dante L. Lucas

GRADUATE STUDIES IN business are increasingly becoming "commoditized" with the proliferation of business schools in Asia, according to the head of the Asian Institute of Management (AIM).

In addition, students' enrollment in business schools worldwide have been falling in recent years, prompting the AIM to revamp its curriculum and program offerings to address these issues.

In a press conference, AIM president Francis G. Estrada said the school has experienced a decline in enrollment along with the global trend, but added that the institution's number of graduates has stabilized of late.

"Our enrollment [numbers] have been flat over the last five years," he told journalists during the school's 39th year anniversary celebration in Makati City.

Estrada pointed out, however, interest is strong in the school's short courses, especially among corporate execs who cannot afford to lose their executives for long periods.

"Our executive education is exploding," he said, referring to AIM's certificate programs that cater to specific management fields.

To address the changes, Estrada said AIM is now testing itself to be "the school of choice" for any manager or entrepreneur wanting to do business in Asia.

"We will extend our curriculum for the entire Asian environment," he said.

The school will also launch a program aimed at retooling its basic management practices, beyond just traditional Islamic banking. The program will cater mainly to businessmen in Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam.

Finally, Estrada said AIM will introduce a new program that will focus on teaching managers to run family businesses, which

THE 19-YEAR-OLD educational institution, used to be Asia's top business school. It finds itself in an environment today where graduate studies are "commoditized" and moves to be more relevant to Asia's needs.

ESTRADA

remains the main mode of business in Asia.

The AIM chief conceded that the business school landscape has changed significantly since the school was founded in 1968.

"At that time, AIM was the only game in town," he said, noting that the region now has a plethora of good business schools, including several that are associated with US-based institutions.

To perfectly, AIM is experiencing heavy competition from schools based in Singapore, Hong Kong and even China for a decline in number of students.

"Graduate education has become a commodity all over the world," he said, adding that Asia remains the exception since it is still considered a growth area for business schools.

At present, he said that enrollment in MBA (Masters in Business Administration) has declined by 10 percent, except in Asia.

"We're in the most exciting area of the world," Estrada said.

The AIM Alumni Association held the first Asian Business Congress last week adopting the theme AIM for a New Asia: Unlocking Opportunities.

The AIM AA gathered foreign and local speakers who tackled various topics on getting ahead in Asia.

In his talk, Mark Fuller, former Harvard Graduate School of Business professor and chair and CEO of The Monitor Group, described as a firm which specializes in the economics of left-wing choice in developing nations, talked about "Unlocking New Opportunities for Innovative Entrepreneurship."

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INFOTECH

3G music phones are hot

By Rita T. Chikiamco

SONY ERICSSON SEES A growing market demand for 3G music phones. Not really surprising, given the Filipinos penchant for music.

"The net, the Walkman music segment is a big product portfolio for 2007. The 3G segment of music phones, especially in the Philippines, has been growing and even operator comments indicate that demand is up. This is good for us," said Dennis Shimizu, general manager for **the mobile maker's** Philippine office, during the formal launch of three new Sony Ericsson phones.

A report from technology research firm IDC said Sony Ericsson has enabled part to the total Co, as the No. 4 cellular phone maker after Nokia, Motorola and Samsung Electronic.

Nokia's shipments in 2006 rose 21 percent to 168 million phones for a 34.1 percent share of the market, up from its 2005 market share of 31.8 percent. Motorola's annual shipments rose 49 percent to 217 million handsets, its market share expanding to 21.3 percent from 17.5 percent in 2005.

IDC said shipments soared 61.5 percent to 16.1 million handsets at Sony Ericsson, expanding its market share to 6.6 percent compared with 4.3 percent a year earlier. 3G phone shipments rose 5 percent to 17 million phones, but its market share slipped to 5.8 percent, down from the year-ago level of 6.6 percent.

To gain a stronger hold in the music phone segment, Sony Ericsson, Japan's Sony Corp. and Sweden's Ericsson AB, released a trio of 3G Walkman phones: the W880i, W610i and W800i.

The three are 3G phones that support real-time video calls, have video MMS, video and audio streaming, and fast file downloads. Mobiles games, music files, new applications, images and e-mail or instant messaging can also be downloaded.

The Sony Ericsson W880i Walkman phone, which retails at P29,500, is the company's first super-thin phone model at only 9.4mm thick.

It is almost as thick as a single CD case but holds as many as 900 full-length music tracks or almost 70 CD albums. The high-storage capacity comes from the provided 1-GB memory stick. The 2Mpixel software lets one easily convert CD music files to WalkMan and its many standard formats.

Aside from the usual 3G features, the W880i's Bluetooth audio streaming feature allows wireless tech access through a mono Bluetooth headset such as the HBH-DS970. Tracks stored in the phone can also be streamed directly to a home or car stereo through the new music Bluetooth receiver called MBR-100. Users can listen to up to an hour 10 hours of music playback.

The music camera phone W610i, meanwhile, packs 470 music tracks on its provided 512 MB memory stick and results before P15,000.

Likewise, it is extendable to 20 hours of playback. The phone also has FM radio, Bluetooth audio streaming, e-mail capability, and two-megapixel camera with zoom lens and advanced lighting. Video recording and playback are also supported.

Like the W880i, the W610 comes with the TrackID music recognition application. The feature lets the user record a clip of an unknown music track onto their phone and receive notification of the track name, artist and album.

Both the W880i and the W610i have the Flat Bridge character that enables the phone text to print digital images directly through a compatible printer.

The Swedish-Japanese joint venture has also released a Walkman phone for the mass market and for first-time music phone users: the W200i.

The phone is affordable in 3G standard at around P8,500 but is still packed with Walkman functions, such as a dedicated player button, a 128 MB memory stick for storing 37 full length tracks, an FM radio, alarm clock, and built-in speakerphone.

Its stereo headset HPH-64 is the first accessory to feature Bass Reflex, an innovation that preserves audio quality when the bass is turned up. The W200i also has a VGA camera with 4x digital zoom, an integrated photo album, Internet browser, PC synchronization, infrared connectivity, and video messaging.

"Pricing is now more spread out and operators are aggressively offering decent plans. We are hoping to reach more users this way," Shimizu said.

THE BLOOD IS BACK.

The long wait is over as the hottest local anthology returns. Youngblood[3] is in the house, loaded with the best essays from 1999 to 2004 in the most concentrated Youngblood package yet. Bear witness as a generation continues its evolution. This is the Filipino youth at their most honest and most eloquent. Here are the essays that matter from the newspaper that started it all. Youngblood[3] is the young Filipino—unplugged.

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BlackBerry sports new look

By Abigail L. Ho

WHEN ONE HEARS THE WORD BLACKBERRY, the images that come to mind are: a. a black or very dark purple fruit, b. a bottle of jam or a piece of pie, c. a personal digital assistant (PDA) cum mobile phone.

Over the past few years, however, Research In Motion (RIM) has made the humble BlackBerry a household name as well—at least in companies that want to empower their workforce to do their work remotely and among upwardly mobile individuals who do not want to lose touch with their personal and business contacts.

The BlackBerry's claim to fame: its push e-mail function that actually "pushes" e-mail to users' BlackBerry devices, instead of users having to "pull" them e-mail from the servers.

As a result, with a BlackBerry device, sending and receiving e-mail becomes as easy as sending and receiving text messages.

One drawback of having a BlackBerry device, however, is hunching over around a rather bulky device that looks a bit off when used for voice calls (imagine a 105A-sized device plastered on your cheek while taking a phone call).

Having learnt its consistent BlackBerry users in mind, RIM Asia Pacific vice president Norm Lo said in a briefing last week that the company would be focusing more on aesthetics when it rolls out new BlackBerry models in the future.

"We're moving into a design language. We'll offer products that are sexier and more fashionable," he said.

He said RIM wanted individuals to see the BlackBerry as a mobile device that could help users balance their work and personal lives.

While it would still continue producing PDA-sized models with big screens, he said RIM would start rolling out smaller models with slimmer designs and more multimedia functions.

"We believe many of our users would still want to use BlackBerry devices with big screens. But there are customers who want slimmer handsets. We just want to provide more choices for the market," he said.

RIM, through Isla-led mobile operator Globe Telecom Inc., recently released in the Philippines the BlackBerry Pearl, which measures four 4.2 inches x 1.97 inches x 0.57 inches and weighs only 3.1 ounces.

The quad-band 8300/8310 and 8800-enabled handsets comes with a QWERTY keyboard and is the first BlackBerry device with a 1.3-megapixel camera.

It also features a media player and a stereo headset jack, allowing users to enjoy their favorite music and videos on the go.

The Pearl's 64MB built-in flash memory is expandable to up to 2GB via a microSD card slot.

"There's a lot of demand from the consumer side—for functions that mix lifestyle with business use. With the BlackBerry Pearl, we offer a holistic view on the design. It also contains a wide range of consumer applications beyond the conventional BlackBerry offerings," Lo said.

Is triple bottom line accounting two bottom lines too many?

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR) has in recent years become a by-word in the corporate world. It is now required to include commitment to CSR in company statements of "core values."

To demonstrate their commitment to good corporate citizenship, firms are compelled to adhere to any of a number of compliance standards for CSR.

Among those are the Sustainability Reporting Guidelines of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and Accountability's AA1000 standards. Both have adopted their own versions of what is known as Triple Bottom Line (3BL) accounting.

3BL accounting represents an attempt to expand traditional financial reporting to take into consideration the impact of the firm's activities on the wellbeing of society and the environment.

3BL is by far the most tangible attempt at establishing guidelines for CSR in terms of measurable data that can be accurately reported and effectively audited.

The effectiveness of 3BL as a means of ensuring sustainable development rests on the premise that the external effects of a firm's activities can be measured objectively using a number of standard indicators that are both observable and verifiable.

The additional social and environmental bottom lines are intended to complement the traditional financial bottom line (net profit for the period) by showing the net impact of the firm's activities on society and on the environment.

3BL implicitly assumes that it is possible to arrive at a single figure that reflects the firm's net impact on society and on the environment. The underlying theory is that economic activity can be reduced to a single, quantifiable unit of measurement.

MAPping The Future

Dr. Nicanor S. Pobleador

Given that, it is not possible to arrive at a single measure of the net impact of a firm's activities on either society or the environment.

By contrast, all entries in the PL statements are expressed in terms of the same unit of measure of value — in units of currency.

While it is possible to compare firms in terms of such specific social or environmental indicators, it is not possible to rank business enterprises in terms of their overall impact on society or on the environment on the basis alone of 3BL.

Current disclosures on 3BL have tended to draw on even more fundamental grounds.

To our minds, of far greater importance to managers is what 3BL implies for the costs and benefits of running a corporation. The relevant questions to ask is: "What does 3BL imply for strategic choices and operational decisions?"

Let's face it. Corporate managers are hired, evaluated and compensated for their contribution to shareholder value. Their main concern therefore is to give maximum profits for their employers.

What corporate managers view CSR and AA1000 standards not as useful guidelines for managerial decision making but as externally-imposed constraints that further restrict their range of choices.

To the resource-constrained executive, these sanctions can be met only at the expense of a smaller financial bottom line. Under such a pro-cost perception, full compliance with the GRI guidelines is impossible, and the best that can be expected are minimal, window-dressing endeavors on the part of corporate managers. Moreover, due to significant information asymmetries and the natural tendency of corporate managers to deliberately conceal damaging information, the agency costs required to monitor and to secure compliance will tend to be prohibitive.

From a somewhat more enlightened perspective, the trade-off between compliance and profit is positive. In pursuing strategies limited on stakeholder theories, devoting more resources to create value for society is seen as a way of enhancing long-run (i.e., "sustainable") profitability.

In our view, the major challenge is to align social and environmental objectives with the strategic goals of business. This is done not by running a long list of assertions down the throats of corporate managers, but, by showing that pursuing social and environmental goals is good for business.

Two things are necessary for this purpose:

1. Translate the standard 3BL metrics into a common scale that would allow managers to determine how much corporate resources should be devoted to social and environmental targets in order to enhance shareholder value.

This requires, among other things, further research to determine its economic value in terms of the effects of social and environmental friendly activities. Only in this way can proper tradeoffs be established.

2. Rethink the system of training, and rewarding corporate managers to align their own personal and professional goals with the long-run interests their shareholders and of all other corporate stakeholders.

At this end 3BL are surely ideas that should be pursued with vigor. However, rather than imposing additional constraints on today's limited corporate managers, they should instead provide meaningful and practical guidelines for pursuing their legitimate profit seeking objectives in a manner that would also create value for society.

(The article reflects the personal opinions of the author, who is also an academic and a knowledge management consultant. He is the author of "STRATEGIC ANTITHESIS and Why Today's Business Ideals are Hell to Deliver". Feedback at mspobs@globelines.com.ph)

His hobby in the 80s turns him into telco veteran

RACE IN TO THE DATE WHEN HARUNTANG went cool Joey Uy was already claiming to be up the ranks of the communications arena. He established Asian Telecommunications and developed into a long-time veteran in sales and installation of two-way radio communications equipment.

In the 90s, he partnered with the biggest telecom distributors in the country at that time. Uy helped the telco company grow, spanning the technology transition from analog to GSM.

Timing and technology were both on Joey's side. The boom of the 90s in the late 80s propelled the Philippine telecom industry forward at a fast pace.

It was the perfect time to create his own company. Thus, Telecom Concepts Inc. was established on May 23, 1988. The company started when a group of telecoms professionals decided to engage in marketing and distribution of mobile technology.

Telecom Concepts Inc. (TCI) was a major distributor of Ericsson and 3Com mobile phones in the Philippines since then. TCI has expanded to include operator prepaid cards for Globe and Smart and Sun Cellular. Other phone manufacturers who are partnered with TCI are LG Electronics and just recently, the Dutch electronics giant, Philips.

From a retail trading business, TCI grew into a holding company which provides management and business strategy to its subsidiaries also engaged in the wireless communication technology. The TCI group of companies includes I-Phone Co. Inc., Star Telecom Philippines, and Load.com.ph.

Through Load.com.ph you can do online electronic loading systems. Anyone can load their prepaid cell phones anywhere in the world, anytime, via the Internet. Electronic DVD's such as online game topups are also available. Load.com.ph's Mobile Electronic Loading System allows mobile phone subscribers with ordinary SIM's, whether prepaid or postpaid, from any telephone operator, to electronically load their own cell phone or electronically load another person's cell phone wirelessly on globe cell to cell SIM.

When asked about his targets for his 20th year in the industry, Uy plans is to sell half a million phones. His ambition comes from confidence in his newest partner, Philips.

"Philips products are really excellent. The most outstanding feature is the battery life. Imagine not having to charge your phone for 5-days! Philips all this at a reasonable price."

Apart from their products being good, Philips also had great use of their partners. Philips puts up promotions not just on their business partners but more importantly the end-customers, and this helps us a lot to promote Philips items."

At 76, Oscar Lopez reaches his peak

From page B1-4

and other trekkers from various companies of the Lopez Group up the slopes of Mt. Pulag on Feb. 17, 2007.

Sight to behold

The group left Baguio for the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) station in Ambuklao for a mandatory briefing by park superintendent Antonio Aliwa. From there they proceeded to the Ranger station in Babadak through rough roads for a quick lunch before taking off to site groups. The hike to Camp 3 took four hours. By the time the campsite was reached at 5 p.m., all the tents were up and ready for accupancy through the efficiency of the lieutenant of the Philippines (LPI) Mountaineers and its band of local "sherpas."

Feb. 16, the eve of the climb to the summit, was cold but clear. The stars were out in full force, twinkling as far as the eye could see in every direction. A moonlit eye could spot an occasional jet plane or satellite passing overhead. It was a sight to behold.

Stargazing was how the Mt. Everest Team's Dr. Ted Esguerra (expedition doctor), members Pastor Ritzie Che (second PE spot to scale Everest on May 18, 2006), Noelle Wenceslao and Carina Reynoldo (first females) spent that evening. Leo Oracion Jr. (first Filipino to reach Everest on May 17, 2006) and two other members chose to rest, while Mikee and Fred Jutzil (former president of the Mountaineering Federation of the Philippines Inc.) chose to join a group of metropolitan hikers calling it a day.

The final climb

Camp 2 is the 10,000's during united company site for Mt. Pulag trekkers and the holding area for those who cannot reach ultimate sickness. It is large enough to carry as many as 150 campers comfortably within respectable distance from each other.

The trekkers awoke at 2 a.m. on Feb. 17 to prepare for the final climb. Hot cups of coffee helped raise body warmth and keep the single digit chill at bay. Stocking at top from last and trail food were stuffed in pockets, cameras and headlamps checked.

At 3:30 a.m., a long and winding single file of what looked like fireflies marched off to watch the sun rise from the vantage point of the mountaintop. It took two hours at a steady slow pace to climb it to reach it just in time. As the trekkers congregated one another, the horizon gradually brightened, starting from a blue hazy that extended to both directions until it became a burst of yellow, orange and red as ember to the rising sun. Below was a calm sea of clouds that covered much of the mountain range.

Prayers of thanksgiving

For the next hour, there were lots of backslapping, picture taking and silent prayers of thanksgiving. We stood there in awe of Nature's majesty. It was enough to remind the forgetful that there is a God to behold, a supreme power that made the universe and holds it together.

From the starting point in Ranger up to the time that the summit was reached, a team of doctors and paramedics monitored vital signs such as blood pressure, oxygen saturation level and heart rate. Except for a handful that suffered from leg cramps, high altitude sickness and gastrointestinal, Lopez and everyone else's registered normal.

Demanding exercise

The Pulag climb was a demanding organizational and logistics exercise. Expedition organizer Rafael Alunan III, president of First Philippine Infrastructure Development Corp. (FPIDC), enabled Ritz de Manzanas (First Philippine Holdings Corp. and Lopez Living Wellness Team) for executing the expedition plans with German Hiu provision with the help of legend Masapre (FPIDC and Philippine Team) and Bernie Cerida of the 20th Mountaineering Club. Food, transport, porter, quartering, safety and emergency requirements were orchestrated with admirable efficiency.

The eternal message

Lopez said the first Philippine Mt. Everest Team are trying to deliver the same message—that adversity should not be a bar to achievement. Both had personal goals to reach the summits of their choice. But on a higher plane, their message is, with determination, obsession and passion, any challenge can be overcome.

BUSINESS Monday

At 76, Oscar Lopez reaches his peak

AT OVER 17,700 FEET ABOVE SEA level, Mt. Pulag is the highest peak of Luzon. It rises to a height of 23,000 feet (one quarter of Mt. Everest, the highest mountain in the world).

Last week, Oscar M. Lopez, the chairman of Philippine Seven Corporation, the operator of 7-Eleven convenience stores in the country, climbed Mt. Pulag.

Lopez Group chair Oscar M. Lopez, a Dinwis buff, had been wanting to climb this mountain for the last few years, but was not allowed by his personal physician for medical reasons.

Obsessed by this dream, Lopez passionately committed himself to a regimen that included physical exercise, proper nutrition and a moderate and healthy lifestyle. In the summer of 2006, he successfully summited the 7,000-foot Mt. Grant Tower in Batangas. After this feat, his doctor finally yielded and cleared him for Mt. Pulag.

Topping the support of the First Philippine 100, Everest Team and its expedition leader Art Valdez for what may be called my adventure of a lifetime for the 76-year-old businessman, Lopez had with Cory and Jay, daughters Nora and Angelica Lopez, and Cory's son Angelo, reached the summit of Mt. Pulag at 7:30 a.m. on Saturday, March 3.

Lopez, who is a graduate of Ateneo de Manila University, Harvard Business School and Stanford University, has been chairman of Philippine Seven since 1988. He is also chairman of Energy Development Corp., Rockwell Land Corp., Meralco and Lopez Holdings Corp.

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BUSINESS

More than just a *flower parade*

Group taps festival to help worthy causes

By Nicanor Cabrera
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—OFFICIALS cited for selling out the Baguio Flowers Festival has actually been a good vehicle for philanthropy.

An exhibition float promoting blanket weaving in Ifugao was a riot of colorful floats flashing product labels that paraded through the new Road, the main street here, on Sunday.

But organizers, workers, who had just recovered from Hong Kong, paid for a stall at the "Session Road in Bloom" banner on the could sell handicrafts that OFWs make to their country cites.

One "Session Road in Bloom" stall displays a large aluminum box that is slowly being filled up with used school bags, notebooks and slippers.

Employees of the Peace and Equity Foundation say the box was meant to engage people's consciences, so they would donate school items to help several 15,000 schoolchildren in Ifugao.

Sharon Ramos, PEF development executive, says various civic groups have used the festival as great lengths to launch self-help programs and to promote products made by underprivileged communities in the provinces.

She says the huge media and commercial attention, which the festival events draw, always tricked down to barrial participants.

The festival float, for example, sustains an advocacy to the summer capital.

Baguio is one of the 10 dream cities tapped by the United Nation Sustainable Energy Development Program (SEDP) to promote a "clean cities" program, which includes energy conservation, pollution control and waste management, as the city found the festival useful for promoting this advocacy spending-based efforts.

The float combines heavenly and sunflower motifs with trailing lanterns made of coconut shells and sugarcane because these are the resources used to produce handicraft (coconut mortar/cover) and bloor-based.

DAGUS made of abaca are marketed by Women Entrepreneurs for Development and Advancement from Naga City.

Romeo Gabriel Ragasas, Baguio chapter president of the Philippine Barbender League Inc., also realizes that the festival could help his organization raise funds to reimburse their expenses in competing for a national barbending contest.

"We were during the national competition on Feb. 15 but we used borrowed money, so we bought a booth to sell cocktails for the contest and P200,000 of our borrowing from winning the competition," Ragasas tells the business.

At night, the bartenders also perform for the crowd.

Aida Banili, owner of Noreen Ann's Flower Shop Cook Ann, the festival a good way of monitoring a small market, which used to benefit overseas Filipino workers based in Hong Kong, to Baguio customers.

Banili, a domestic helper there, says Filipinos have been selling beaded trinkets on Hong Kong streets and parks during holidays or during their break time to make ends meet.

"OFWs themselves produce these trinkets. I learned the craft from shop owners in Hong Kong). We all learned to make beaded roses (which are sold for 15 Hong Kong dollars each). But because of the rallies involving Filipino workers seeking bigger pay, authorities there began to crack down on us. We were no longer allowed to sell in the parks," Banili says.

"I just arrived recently from Hong Kong where I worked as a domestic helper. I saw the festival could help me clear my inventory here," she says.

She says various management organizations, which they have been sending to the festival since 2003, managed to earn enough to sustain their operations.

But in this year's staging of the Panagbenga, PEF wanted "concrete, direct approach," she says.

She says the PEF installed a box to see if people in a festive mood are also in a giving mood. The items they are soliciting from people can be bought from the various artisans in Baguio. "So many people responded," she says.

Some businessmen found their booths a waste of good money, however.

"There were businessmen who wanted to buy the booth from us because they felt it could better serve their products. Malaki kasi (This is a big booth), but we have been paying the rent of many NGOs that used to sell (their products) at the festival, so the opinion was never an issue," she says.

HANDICRAFTS' entrepreneur owners glass encased butterflies into accessories.

HANDS painted T-shirts sells for P120 to P450 at Session Art in "Session Road in Bloom."

We are changing the FACE of Philippine TV.

SMART

Consistency keeps 21-year-old firm at the top

IN HIS LONG REGIME OF OUTstanding television commercials in the Philippines, marketer Tony Bangsic cherishes Magnolia's 2000 anniversary in 2000 the most, probably because with such exuberance, the client expected nothing less than great hits in all advertising campaigns.

Bangsic was at that time in top management and on his way to bigger things outside of the agency handling the all-important Magnolia account.

The commercial was shot and, to Bangsic' delight, the footages came out great. But there was a hitch. "They were so excellent they overwhelmed the editor. Nothing from together became a problem," Bangsic recalls.

The agency saw several edits, but was not happy with the results. Enter Tony Gloria, former head of creative of the Philippine Advertising Counselors' (PAC), at the time one of the biggest agencies in the country.

Gloria had to pitch hard for the campaign to be started, TVC Production Inc.

With established commercial production houses salivating over the project, TVC had the thinnest credentials to be in the game. But it seized the account through the Grand of the creatives led by director Santiago and gave the fledgling production house its break.

"I saw Tony Gloria who played the footages together," said Bangsic. "He taught fresh perspective, excellent craftsmanship and creativity, the commercial came out the way people liked it."

The commercial, 30 Heroes of Years of Magnolia, showing timelines and friends bonding and enjoying lunches was launched at the PBC and consequently was awarded Ad of the Year.

UNITED, Productions was able to force sister companies like United Pictures. In first ads creation, "Crying Ladies," was rejected by Procter-Gamble (shown in photo with United's Gloria and CEO Fely Gloria) and was named Best Picture in the 2003 MMFF awards.

After logging the Magnolia project, Gloria renamed his company United Productions Inc.

And for the past 21 years, Gloria has earned the distinction of being one of the biggest and leading production houses that help create some of the most memorable television commercials. It is a fact that has not escaped award-giving bodies such as the influential Asia Television Broadcasting Agencies (ATA).

"Winning the Production of the Year Award for three out of nine added our most significant hurdle as United's list of credentials, which had grown so long it has piqued the interests of clients all the way to the top brass.

The staff is made up of a talented team of directors, editors, visual effects animators and producers who are chosen to ensure representation, time and time again, some of whom have moved up to become the heads of companies recently started by United.

But in summing up the company's achievements as the last 21 years, Gloria could think of only one word—consistency.

"You can be good in one year, two years, but it is hard to be good in 10 years, 15, 21. Even if there were ups and downs, we've managed," he says.

Gloria was understating it. Marlowe Bautista-Gonzalez, Tiempo, Inc.'s United executive producer and past general manager of Straight Shooters Inc., a sister company, has worked with Gloria for 14 years and could attest that the production house has gone from strength to strength because it is driven by talent, by innovation and passion constantly.

"Gloria has expanded its core value in its export to moving images to become a one-stop creative provider.

As Gloria explains, selling a brand has become dull segmented. "Now, in addition to 30-second spots, we have infomercials, events and branded entertainment. We have to provide because this is how media consuming now."

This must be reason the company expanded five years ago to include United Pictures, whose first venture was a co-production with Abbas."

It's first solo production, "Crying Ladies," was named best picture in the 2003 Metro Manila Film Festival. Its latest was "Sisay Sisay," which was seditious and dramatic, a comedienne and a director of films.

This desire for value-added service has also compelled the company to be consistently on the prowl for the latest in imaging technology. It is the first and the only production house in the Philippines today using high definition post and shoot, and the first in Southeast Asia to invest in the latest line of Sony HDCAM 3R.

United immediately saw the huge potential of digital imaging in terms of better workflow and cost-saving, just as it was creating, and quickly moved to launch high definition shoots in the Philippines. It was also the push-cart thing to do.

For example, the cost of San Miguel Corporation's "Basketball" commercial would have been considerable if it were filmed entirely in 35mm. United Pictures suggested shooting in film format but combining it with HD for the simulated basketball scenes in the Antares Coliseum, which required continuous taping in the game progressed.

And the quality of output? "You wouldn't be able to tell the difference. The quality of the output was indistinguishable from film or television," she insisted.

"Tony has a very good vision of either technology or what we needed to do to be in the creative content company. By now the one who told me we needed to invest in workflow editing technology when he saw it in a demo in Film World." Jun Reyes, Gloria's partner in United and one of the company's top in-house directors, recalled.

It is also in the pace and style of the company to develop close relationships with clients. Tony Gloria was originally when he co-founded an running the client's TVC.

Gloria expounded: "In my experience, additional and unnecessary costs are spent because you don't communicate well. We're not just a production house. We're also consultants, and in some cases we want to use our director to explain to them the technical details of a project, especially the new technologies."

He said discussing technical terms with a client may be a long process but that is inseparable because he considers pleasing a client and successfully providing the results of production.

Tony Gloria believes it is the brand that must stand out to stay commercial. He maintained that the brands "are here to stay."

The main course is the selling of the brand. And whatever it will take to sell a product through moving images United will do.

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MTV comes out with new owners

NEW OWNERS AND NEW PARTnerships inform opportunities. Viacom tells this to new and existing clients for MTV which is also its global direction to further solidify ties and expand its reach of partners, the independent MTV Philippines is positioned to create new entertainment with "free Filipino flavor for the youth market.

Now Viacom's mandate was to digitize all MTV data (cable) and satellite the region in view of straight out licensing.

At Youth Channels Inc., got the licensee to air and operate the MTV channel in the Philippines. This completely Filipino-managed MTV channel under the All Youth aims to bring more localization to conventional the programming that has propelled MTV as the world's largest television network and leading multimedia brand for the youth.

Although ownership of MTV Philippines has changed on paper, the transition that took place on air last Jan. 1, 2007, is an indication that it is business as usual for MTV.

That is exactly what Pamela D. Lomas, chair & CEO of MTV Philippines and the All Youth Channels Inc. group, planned and hoped for.

Apart from managing the MTV business and brand locally, All Youth will be focused on developing and upgrading core businesses related content, new consumers, wireless carriers and more.

The MTV Philippines Channel, Nickelodeon blocks on cable and sBC 5 with the Nickelodeon, and TFC channels franchise are the hottest assets for the beginning for this entrepreneur's vision of becoming a leader in the content provider industry.

Steven Tan, CEC president of MTV Networks Asia Pacific, is pleased about the continuity of the business and presence of the MTV brand in the Philippines. He further stressed that MTV Philippines under All Youth will continue to enjoy the support of MTV Networks International.

We to put, NBC is very proud of the role it has significantly played to bring the first Filipino joint venture partners of the biggest and most recognizable multimedia youth brand in the world.

"MTV Philippines was NBC's baby for eight years," Randy Ocampo, who served as MTV's director for radio and All Youth Channels Inc., explained. "It's satisfying for executives like us who nurtured the MTV brand under NBC's guidance, to see that yet another managing is confident that we are ready to take this next step on our own."

For this opportunity he said, they will do their best to make it NBC.

Apart from continuing the legacy of over 25 years of Music Television, the local content also expect more of the MTV Philippines localized twist encouraging the passions and interest of the youth on-air, on-ground, online.

Training principals to become efficient 'managers'

FOR PROPER MANAGEMENT OF AN educational institution to exist since it serves as a setting where young minds are created and where talents are nurtured. "Schools for all" – Asian's rallying cry for the education sector—is being implemented in the Philippines through the Department of Education. Because of this, teachers, curriculum training and seminars to keep them updated with the latest in their field. But only that, the school management—principals, supervisors, consultants, etc.—likewise need to evolve and be receptive to the latest concepts and strategies in terms of managing their learning institution.

The Member Management and Leadership Development Center (MMLDC)—a training center and education foundation accredited by the Philippine Council for NGO Certification—offers a "School-based Management Development Program (SBMDP)" that targets principals and education managers aimed at making them effectively addresses their needs and concerns.

"This program offers specialized training for education managers that cater to elements and include their roles in community involvement in schools," said Vivian Antonio, director of MMLDC's academic services. The program, she added, intends to "equip [and] teachers with skills to effectively prepare, implement and evaluate their School Improvement Plans (SIP)."

In 2006, around 120 principals and teachers from 40 schools in Cavite were given training intervention by the MMLDC through the SBMDP. There were also training provided for teachers in partnership with Cystech Foundation (around 744 teachers from Cavite schools).

The beneficiaries are the school head and the school itself. The participants have continuously reported researches towards the school from the training programs," said Vivian. She cited the Division of Antipolo (with all its 56 schools)—the first set of beneficiaries of MMLDC in the education sector—as one of the most successful boards.

The immediate effect of the program is actually manifested, first and foremost, with the improvement in the perspective and behavior of participants. "Principals and school heads were now aware how they can become better managers. At the same time, they gained enough competence to convey their knowledge from good to good," she noted Pelayo.

For this year, MMLDC plans to offer the SBMDP by the end of the calendar of the Division of Cavite. The Foundation also plans to rebrand its Integrated Labor Relations Program and conduct a Youth Camp that will focus on social responsibility.

For more information, visit the website at www.mmldc.com or call 632-911-7 or e-mail mmldc.mail@mmldc.com.ph. MMLDC is located at Rm. 28, Sumaring Highway, Antipolo City.

RP JEWELRY INDUSTRY

Firms call on gov't to add sparkle to sector

By Amy R. Borres

"JEWELRY IS NOT JUST LUXURY."

This says Ma. E. Fountanosa, president of the Guild of Philippine Jewellers Inc. during the recent Good News Explains Forum held at Figaro in Greenhills E.

"More than just to adorn yourself, jewelry is an essential investment convenience as it appreciates over time," explains Fountanosa. "Fine jewelry makes use of metals that have intrinsic value such as gold, silver and platinum and that which can be traded in a commodity."

Businesses adds that the Philippines is lucky enough to have such abundant natural resources as its disposal, which spurred the growth of the local jewelry industry.

Sunrise industry

But this "sunrise" industry is thriving by serving many of the foreign markets than its homebase.

Last year, exporters of jewelry amassed sales of around $40 million in the jewelry industry, which employs around 60,000.

Locally, however, jewelers have sold only about P2 billion worth of their jewelry.

"But this P2 billion figure represents the revenues of only about 1 percent of the local jewelers," says Fountanosa. "Revenues of the remaining 99 percent of the country's jewelers are termed 'unrecognized' as they mostly belong to the underground industry."

The underground jewelry industry is comprised of those who sell to their "kumares" and officemates, or a much lower price than the local jewelry brands.

Underground

In a nutshell, foreign markets are being served by the country's big jewelry exporters

ARAGON

FAUSTINANN: 'Jewelry is an investment.'

which the domestic market is being served mainly by the underground industry.

"The latter's focus is geared at mid-to-cost jewelry industry but we don't have to worry about the local jewelers from the underground industry to go above the ground," says Fountanosa.

She adds that there are big markets that await Filipino jewelers such as UK and Spain, and the rest of the European markets.

Key players

According to Benjamin M. Aragon, of Incanto Inc., makers of fine sterling silver jewelry, the country's jewelry industry should be one of the key players in the export sector since it has many key factors in its favor.

First, the Philippines has abundant natural resources at its disposal, and second, it has skilled workers, whose talents is designing is on par with the rest of the world.

Europe, for instance, has long enlisted our pieces.

"There is a huge export industry awaiting the country's jewelry industry, a whole big market out there. But we have to have more efforts to move forward," adds Fountanosa.

She explains that the sad thing about the existing jewelry industry is that first, most jewelers are from the underground economy and second, the jewelry we export is not available locally.

According to Fountanosa, one incentive that the government provides to underground jewelers is the passage of the Jewelry Act.

Republic Act 8532, otherwise known as the Jewelry Industry Development Act of 1998, frees users tax and duty relief to jewelry manufacturing including jewelry parts, components and raw materials components and equipment.

"It reduces the number of growing underground jewelers. The government also could do something about VAT in that our search of the jeweler's working capital," explains Fountanosa. "Setting up an export zone for jewelry exporters would be a big help as well."

By going above ground, Fountanosa says that the standardization of domestic products, particularly jewelry, is important as this does not only make the jewelry industry more credible, but also gives it a firmer foundation.

As for the underground jewelers, quality and standard can sometimes be compromised if there's a commercial to follow.

Government efforts

Meanwhile, the Department of Trade and Industry, through its export arm, Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions, aims to further strengthen fine jewelry sector through projects and participation in various corporate and exhibitions.

"The country's strength is in its workers' creativity—their ability to come up with unique designs to go with the world's best designers," Trade Undersecretary Al Domo.

In its pursuit to expand the market for Philippine fine jewelry to Asia, China, regards, to make the local jewelers, will fly to Hong Kong soon to showcase the finest Philippine pieces in the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Center.

As the Philippine jewelry industry is very young, most of the companies are actually small and medium-sized enterprises.

The sector primarily manufacturers, produces and sells jewelry made of precious metals or base metals clad with precious and semi-precious stones.

"There is a need to jumpstart the jewelry sector since the Philippines clearly has an edge," says Libongcogon. "Let's support the local jewelers to propel the growth of this industry."

Support Pinoy

The Philippine jewelry industry needs much support, not only from the government but also from the Filipino consumers.

For instance, young entrepreneur Rajen David, owner of The Gift Empire, four of consumer jewelry, admits that she had tested the waters in selling fine jewelry in the local market.

David started creating intricate jewelry pieces as hobby in 1995.

She says she didn't plan to be in this business until seven years later, when she discovered a way to create unique pieces but still be within reach of the common buyer. For a couple of years, she joined the influx of designer creations jewelry from China and Taiwan.

But the biggest challenge however, is selling the pieces locally.

"I think a lot of people are wearing mass-produced costume jewelry because it's not available locally. Back then, some mall owners do not appreciate new brands and upcoming costume jewelers," says David.

According to her, it was the fashion magazines that helped her to some of her exposure as most of their clientele and accessories and costume jewelry, adding that it's one of the better alternatives to upgrading other ordinary plain clothes.

To date, however, a change in mentality is visible.

The upcoming Cinderella 5, for instance, will host scores of top Filipino jewelry exporters, such as Artist, Island Pride, Javier Cristal, among 10 others of foreign names.

The success of the jewelry industry does lies mainly on the consumers' support from the Filipino consumer and, second, support from the government through laws that will help a local jewelry thrive in both local and foreign markets.

"The Filipino consumer must first be educated appreciation of jewelry, once consumers realize the intrinsic value and how it can be a form of investment," explains Fountanosa.

She says that, for instance, we have to get over imported materials. "We have to change the mentality and get a change to local jewelers, especially the newcomers."

Fountanosa urged friends to "Filipino-made jewelry products are on par with any kind of jewelry elsewhere in the world," adds Aragon. "Our industry's exports to other countries to Asia, the US and Europe—places where our jewelry are highly regarded."

DAVID: "Support Pinoy!"

PHOTOS BY JOHN LOZADA

Pinoy young blood shines in Shanghai

ROSS Jean

GAUGHT ON THE ROAD AT MOON, Ros Jean and company decide to stop at a restaurant. Eager to test her newly acquired knowledge of the Shanghai language, the young Filipino sure manager for Shanghai relies to talk the Chinese owner to join them at the table for lunch. They have a hearty laugh at the realities she just told the owner the rough equivalent of "you are me."

Ros Jean was in Figaro, less only hours after co-pente announcement for the Philippines from China. As she starts sharing such friends at work in the morning, Ros Jean, of Figaro and more till closing, whenever she has to attend to important matters or a visitor or group.

Behaviour, she does not with her various people, which she's quick to describe as "getting a feel of the man or lot." One night, it's with her group of different nationalities another night, her Shanghainese friends; still another, her Malaysian school friends; and then, what she refers to as the Pinoy mafia—a group of Filipino bigwigs and their VIP visitors she sees the resident's have hung with in Manila. This week's days end at one or two in the morning.

According to Ros, the two Figaro branches under the their supervision. People on close personnel whether so-and-so is in town, and together let them know when they're going to be many for a while. If you ever find yourself in Shanghai, head for the Shanghai Centre, the Liu Tiandi restaurant Garland, 160 Yanger Ln [Road] or the kiosk in Fuxing Centre, an office building along Maoping St Ln. Locals and expats alike may check hangout with them. Here, window a sweeping view of downtown, designers and writers meet with clients and friends. Most are noted university graduates in their 20s and 30s, who correspond to the coffee culture.

Not everyone who walks into Figaro's is a coffee savvy though. In-fact, customers steaming just what and how much goes into each order of beverage are pointed at the menu. Unsure of to try new things, the locals are getting into the practice of coffee. Of course, it's fun to sing.

In a tea-drinking country that catered its doors to the rest of the world barely recently, residents are proud to be connected to English and to the news of the West. It's not unusual to see locals order lattes and cappuccinos than sit by Nigeria's glass facade intermittently staring to-ware sign into their coffee, sending the news in a language they're trying to learn while they sip a beverage they're trying to get used to. But Ros is sure that China will develop a real tea habit. "Of all the cities in China", she says, "the fastest developing and one that adapts the quickest is Shanghai. Shanghainese are the most cosmopolitan so they're the first to adapt to what's happening in the West and it's something that they really look up to. After they adapt to coffee then the other cities follow suit."

Eager to share more with the clients, Ros organizes in-store events. Last Jan. 20, there was a talk on designing fashion jewelry. Still ongoing is a 12-month jewelry making workshop. Monday nights (she invited Jean's Gary for a session at the mouth to book club a la Starsh day when those who have read the designated book come together to share their views on it. Every third Saturday is book club meetings day, an innovation when they really look up to. After they adapt to coffee then the other cities follow suit."

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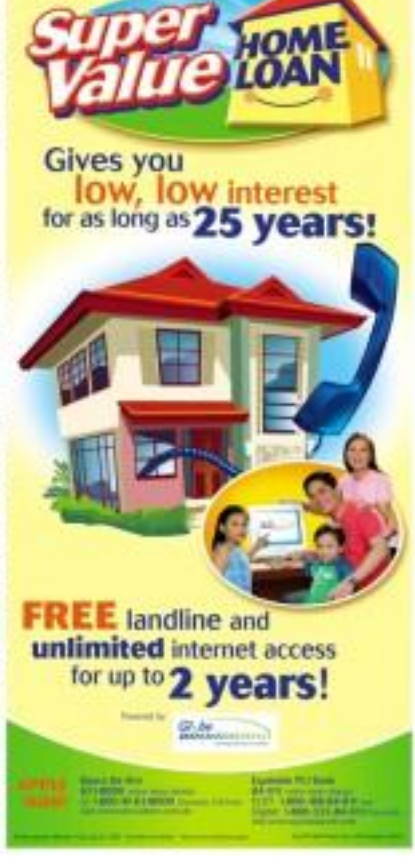

BUSINESS Monday

Working to stay on top of the credit card game

JOUBERT

By Margie Quiniquin Rupisa

HIS NAME JOSTEN PIENEK but he's an Englishman. He grew up when there was apartheid in South Africa. He is a math major. He loves to play golf, but admits his wife is a better player and just after a few weeks in Manila he is loving it and looking forward to moving to the country for three to five years.

Meet Josh Joubert, the new country manager of Visa Philippines, tasked to further expand the world card firm's market in the country and connect what a client to be its number one position.

Although branding wise, MasterCard may be ahead because of its clubbed. "Priceless" campaign that has lasted for nearly a decade, Joubert says the card to decide or other consumer—the total value of the transactions made using the credit card.

And he says that on this basis, Visa controls 51 percent of the Philippine market.

Last year, Visa saw its total card sales volume, which includes debit withdrawals and cash advances, totaled P1324 billion, 25.9 percent higher than 2006. Retail sales in shops and point-of-sale terminals in 2006 reached P43 billion, 23 percent higher than 2005.

Businessfolder recently met with Joubert to talk about how and the credit card business in the country.

He says his ascension ranges: set to South Africa in 1995. He died was a member of the Royal Air Force and his mom, who's now 95 years old, was a nurse. They met, got separated, met again in Egypt and finally got married and lived for a while in Australia.

Asked about apartheid's political system that prevailed in South Africa from 1948 to the 1990s where the black races discriminated against and racist privileges were given only to people of European origin, Joubert says "it was less difficult than what most might have imagined."

"The elite and the upmost were the same but lasted on color lines," was how he described it.

When he was manager of Barclays Bank in 1992, his secretary was black. Her husband, also black, worked in the bank and there was no problem in the office environment.

"Barclays was a well integrated firm," he comments.

But Joubert and his wife eventually opted to raise their two daughters in Australia. One daughter is a lawyer in Melbourne and the other lives in Sydney.

After a series of bank posts in Australia, he joined Visa some six years ago.

His main goal in the Philippines is to "educate the Visa business." Although Visa is more closely associated with a credit card, it defines itself more as a payment provider.

"We provide consumers and merchants a convenient way of paying," Joubert says.

Over the last 18 months, Joubert says, "we have achieved a major position in terms of market share and position. There are several and good prospects ahead."

Visa is replacing partnerships with smaller banks and will concentrate in financial literacy programs, which involves seminars that talk on savings and investments and proper use of credit cards.

It also wants to pursue the debit card business for the Philippines because Joubert says that under this, "cardholders are under no risk of getting into debt" because they only have money that you have, unlike a credit card where you can make a purchase without the money to pay for it.

Credit card companies make money from fees they charge banks on facilities the transactions. Visa's banks issue credit cards and collections of payments are also done via the banking system.

On credit card fraud, Joubert says that while the impression is that the Semalulot activities are on the rise, those are actually on the decline by "a couple of basis points or a fraction of one percent."

He mentions the two most common credit card frauds are "skimming" and photographing of the PIN code. Skimming means intercepting the information on the magnetic strip at the back of every card using a special device. The photographing of the PIN is rare in the Philippines and is more prevalent in developed countries.

Joubert points out that card companies have already created systems that monitor unusual credit card activities of the cardholder—such as transactions happening in various countries or almost the same time and frequent use in spite of a few hours. This prompts the card firms to contact the cardholder.

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MOVEMENTS

GSK has new country head

GLAXOSMITHKLINE (GSK) Asia Pacific senior vice president and regional director Vasudevamurthy Thyagarajan announced the appointment of Mark T. Gaon as the new president and managing director for the Philippine operations. GSK is the biggest research-based pharmaceutical company and pharmaceutical company in the country, a market leader in the areas of anti-infectives, respiratory and vaccines. With its portfolio of breakthrough medicines for asthma, diabetes, hepatitis B, and hypertension, the company has a significant presence in the pharmaceuticals market.

Prior to his Philippine assignment, Gaon was managing director for Thailand/Myanmar for GlaxoSmithKline (Limited) and has been with the Company since 1990, having held various executive positions with GSK Australia and New Zealand, respectively.

Gaon is also known for sponsoring entrepreneurship in a working environment where employees feel a sense of ownership in the business.

A New Zealander, Gaon is married with three children.

David Verklin to head Media Lions jury

LONDON—David Verklin, chief executive officer of Carat Americas and chair of Carat Asia Pacific has been appointed Media Lions Jury president, the organizers of the 54th Cannes Lions International Advertising Festival announced today.

Based in New York, Carat Americas posted Gross Income (GI) of $2.6 billion in 2006 and also supervised the Chair of Carat Asia Pacific. Verklin, who joined Carat from the operations of Foote/Cone/Belding, Lowe Worldwide, Canada and Asia Pacific as well as on the boards of Interpublic, the ultra site on the board of directors for Aegis Group plc (Carat's holding company).

Under Verklin's leadership, Carat Americas has grown into one of the world's leading media-centric diversified marketing services companies as well as the fastest growing within the network with its current billings exceeding $8 billion annually. Carat Americas companies have over 3000 clients.

Based in one of the most frequently quoted experts in the media services industry and generally rely on the board of the American Advertising Federation, the Ad Council, the World Federation of Advertisers, the Point Foundation (University Initiative) as well as the New York Multiple Sclerosis Society.

Verklin began his career at Young & Rubicam, New York. He helped create the Private & Partners in San Francisco, first winning on his worldwide service and later managing the entire region as its managing director. Under his leadership, Bill Roney grew into one of the largest privately held advertising agencies in the United States. Verklin is a graduate of the University of Virginia. He lives with his wife and their three children in Connecticut.

Launched in 1998, Media Lions honors the best in media strategy, planning and execution. The 54th International Advertising Festival will be held 17-23 June 2007 in Cannes, France.

Grey global group has new chair

NEW YORK, NY—Grey Global Group, a WPP company and the parent company of Grey Worldwide and GD, announced that James R. Heekin (Jim) Gray has been elected chairman of the board of directors effective July 1, 2007 as Grey begins its 90th year. He succeeds Edward H. Meyer who remains Emeritus chairman, culminating a storied 50-year career at Grey, including more than a decade as CEO.

Grey Global Group works among the world's top marketing organizations, serving clients in the Fortune 500, and operates 110 offices in 88 countries with 10,000 employees. Its multidisciplinary offer focuses on operating companies such as Grey Worldwide, [illegible] and independent, stand-alone companies such as Grey Healthcare Group, GD Group and MediaCom.

Martin Sorrell, CEO of WPP, said, "Jim Heekin will be focusing on assuring Grey's creative standards are not below with the help of Tim Mellors and on its integration of the practice-only units around Brian Lee, chairman and worldwide with Jon Cohn. Through WPP, Jim and Jon will further enhance Grey Global's capabilities and resources, not only in the creative sectors of the BtoB and Public Relations disciplines, but in the faster growing areas of Asia Pacific, Latin America, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Central and Eastern Europe."

Editor Cleofe Bansil-Formoso
LIFESTYLE
Editor Edna Lim B. Zulueta

IN THIS ISSUE

■ **Encore for 'Virtuoso Strings' on March 9** /D3
■ **John Paul II drama on CineVita** /D4

'Basilia ng Malolos': Kudos to a new 'sarswela'

Nicanor Tiongson's powerful play on Basilia Tiantoco and the women of Malolos is for keeps. It is on extended run this week at the Wilfrido Ma. Guerrero Theater

By Antonio C. Hila
Contributor

THE STORY OF "BASILIA NG Malolos" is a poignant story of women's struggle for liberation. "Basilia" is the collective embodiment of the "Women of Malolos" to whom Dr. José P. Rizal wrote a letter in 1889, extolling the women, numbering 20 to 18, for their bold act of petitioning the colonial government through then Gov. Gen. Valeriano Weyler to open a night school devoted to the teaching of the Spanish language. The friars then abhorred the idea of letting the natives learn the Spanish language, as it would

2 out of 3 Filipinos are proficient in English.
Let's make it 3 out of 3.
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Visual Arts

"HALF MOON Bay"

Isidro at Yellow Door

Illustrador's "Landscapes" will open at Yellow Door Gallery (Bonifacio Court, Power Plant Mall, Rockwell) March 3 and run until March 14. The noted abstract painter's portrait and landscapes in vibrant colors and intimate figures. Call 9955-8024/41.

"BREADTH the Rainbow Sea"

Tortorici at MET

The Metropolitan Museum of Manila will open "The Art of Ms. Tat-Oh: Brushstrokes in Meditation," featuring works by famous Leyte artist Anita R. Tortorici. March 8 & 10 pm. All the museum's Fred Ruiz Gallery. Tour ticket is for the benefit of the Children's Outreach Program of the museum. Call 5211511.

"BOY with Rooster"

"STILL Life"

"LANDSCAPE"

Galura watercolors in three galleries

ALFRED GALURA'S MASTERY OF watercolor takes the spotlight in simultaneous exhibits at Gallery Nine in Megamall, Pet Gallery at Mall of Asia, and 3rd Gallery in Serendra until March 10.

Featured are unusually majestic sea- and landscapes, still lifes, and figurative renditions keen with shimmerous, all pulsating. Galura's wide range of genres, which include portraiture. Call 8877002, 5568836 and 908 3152.

Padilla at La Soufflé

EDGARDO Padilla's newest exhibit at the corner of a room. See exhibits by Vincent Padilla featuring that title expresses and embraces the personal-fictional visions, selves and ideals that now see closer to those living in such a space. Showing until March 15 at La Soufflé (Esmeralda Tower, downstairs Ortas, Poolwork Lane, Makati). "Exhibition" is a display of oil and acrylic works. Padilla draws his inspiration from both his personal experiences and current episodes happening in the real world, particularly the social, as seen in those in Mandaluyong, where he currently lives.

"Nuclear 6"

Chalk arts fest at UST

The University of Santo Tomas will hold the 2007 Thomasian Challenge on March 9, 11 a.m.–6 p.m., at the 2nd deck of the Quadricentennial Park, UST campus, Manila. Theme (title) is "Unity in Diversity." All schools are invited to join the chalk arts competition. Call the UST Public and Alumni Affairs Office, 406-1611 loc. 8265.

Villamarin at Silverlens Gallery

Silverlens Gallery (2320 Paseng Tuna Extension, Whitehouse 7, Vasquez Building) presents an exhibit of photo collages, "Home is Where the Heart Is," by AJ Ormsby-Villamarin, until March 10. Words, performer, cinematographer, director, AJ and photographer Vilma Cruz combine their multi-threading with color and humor sensitive to usual visual photography. Call 8400644 or e-mail info@silverlensgallery.com.

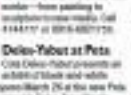
"THE WEDDING," by Carlos Francisco II

'Yakap' at Kaida

Kaida Art Gallery (25, G/F Building, 120 Kamuning Rd., QC) presents a group exhibit, "Yakap," until March 14. Some 40 works at this showcase their creative flow going to sculpture to new media. Call 4144117 or 0915-6807139.

Delos-Yabut at Peta

Cora Delos-Yabut presents an exhibit of black-and-white drawings, which opens March 26 at the new Peta Theater Center, Sunnyside Drive, New Manila, QC. The exhibit runs until April 11. Call 7260344 or 9100803.



"SUNFLOWERS"

Infanta, Sona in Libis

Pastel masters Ilse Infanta and Fernando Sena have scored another showcasing their pastel paintings, until March 8 at L'Oreoso Lobby, Edsa cor. Libis, QC. Infanta's paintings show the dramatization at dusk into the light across to an abstraction in evoking of a landscape with layering of grass, delicate tenderness with tones and subtle gradations of tonal value. Sena's works have an immediate appeal in the bustle subjects, sentimental touches or amazing sense of lighting. Sena affirms lighting as a compositional cornerstone—one of his distinctive trademarks.

COLLABORATIVE collage by Pacing Anading and MM Yu

Anading, Yu at Magnet

Mag.net Gallery (The Loop, G/F Center, MRC-GBN Compound, E.r. Shaw, QC) presents "Variable Desire," some artist of collages by Abbi Yu and Pacing Anading, March 8–21. In their collaborative, the pair set out various images from the two art history books and reconstituted them into a collection of sexual-erotic collages. Call 8171806 or e-mail anne@magnet.com.ph.

Lim at Magnet-Katigumo

For Women's Month, Mag.net Katigumo presents "Remembrance Pa, Love Yun Dami" by Lenard Lim. Curated by Norberto Thanos, the show crystallizes the themes of working, stillness and quietness. The artist presents intangible phases of self-reflexivity by taking self-timed and cropped photos of himself in different stages of working over a long area, slash, and faithfully rendering them in 3 x 4-foot paintings. Mag.net is at Aguas Bldg., 216 Katipunan Ave., QC. Call 8262181.

Acid vision and psychological terrorism

By Constantino C. Tejero

THE WORLD COULDN'T GET any bleaker than this...is the viewer's first reaction upon stumbling into the gallery showing Igan D'Bayan's latest psychological terrorizing of mind's eye basics.

On and now if you must: snagger corn his second solo exhibit, "Long Live the New Flesh," with 21 pieces in mixed media on canvas, until March 11 in the Crucible at the Artwalk, U.N. Bldg. A, 388 Megamall, Mandaluyong City.

This is imagery that's in most suppositions, surrealist and gothic—bearing like is an annual pageant of Machine hybrids, Cyberesque rovers, Francis Bacon grotesques, Smithwick lighting, Dominique torments, and film clips from Guillermo del Toro.

As in his first exhibit, the dark inspiration here is rock soul all that acid-tripping, and the outlawed the artist's price-hopelessly imbued with sound influences.

The viewer won't immediately grasp the meaning of the image unless the title is read. D'Bayan's imagery, however, is compelling enough to affect the viewer not only at gut level but also mentally.

The exhibition's most illuminative clue: dark vision of humanity: "It is Rembrandt meets Bruegel. Evil in this show, which features paintings of masses of war, sexual perversion, tortured monsters, as well as chimerism from children's books and cartoons, which are depicted as twisted mythology of humanity.

"It is the artist's way of saying everything has become rancid and rotten—even the past, more so the future—in this profound yet world characterized by fear and pessimism."

Hellish torments

The rich source-coloration of D'Bayan's first show is here replaced by muted monochromes, chiefly brown and gray, sometimes accentuated with incandescent blue, amid-yellows. Mood-red, these are his signature skeletal figures in various stages of contortion and mutilation.

Typical are "Hand of Doom" and "Bugged," the kind of diabolic portraiture spawned by the artist's nerves. They show bones peeling out of muscular like carefully rendered cross sections of the human anatomy in a medical study—but the heads are skulls that resemble insects, goats or dogs.

The large piece "Pull Me Rite Apart and Let the Sun Out" is ostensibly the artist's self-portrait, but instead of showing the sensitive he plumbs the depths. Instead of physiognomy identifying the artist, we see his hellish elements, as tentacles tug at his legs, the abdomen is ripped apart, ribs and intestines about to spill out.

Four broad lines of white incandescence radiate from the chest, but by the look of it one can't be sure whether this energy is emanating from or stifling down the pain. He looks as if he's either embracing clutch of light sabers or repelling gigantic springs.

Blackest humor

Despite the despair, however, humor lurks, albeit black. Typical is "Undead No. 1, which is, of course, his least horrific.

Here a male human from with long head on the foreground is covering with hands his bloodied crotch, presumably gelded, as gnomish phallomes are hanging in a rub-on the ground. A former Dali piece with a patch for eyeds and sprouting insect hand is on the background, presumably the mourning female.

Certainly the centerpiece is "Three Purgatories," a colossus of bones and viscera, skull and toilet bowl, disembodied body parts intimate with heads of lovers and a human fist for a foot. One female hurls is an from while a male is taking her from behind, her abdomen distended to expose curling fetus.

"I have such a wet-pad take on motherhood," admits D'Bayan. "Other therapists may be shocking at repulsive to most people like the Hammer versus with heads on it on the cover of Joan's Addiction's Nothing." Or any of Swiss surrealist H. Giger's female subjects in his infamous human/machine covers. (And I love them!) appealing. I like the subjects because they are a celebrations of bone and ligament, juxtaposed with something sick, twisted and freakfuller—life, sex and death in one frame."

All this fascination with sickness and death reveals what the artist really is a moralist. What we see here is actually the mask of a demon lover.

"DISCO Purgatorio" (above) and "Hand of Doom"

"PULL M... Rite Apa... and Let t... Sun Out"

New book on pastel artist Bolaños

GREG BOLAÑOS, KNOWN AS THE KING OF Pastel, will mark his 70th birthday with the launching of his first book "Pastel" on March 8 at Bolaño Restaurant in Little Baguio, San Juan.

In the book are over 200 recent works of Bolaños as compiled by publisher Marlene Apalito.

Growing up in the pastoral landscape of Davao, Bolaños spared no medium in exploring his fascination for art. When pencil, crayons and paper were scarce, he etched his work on banana leaves or used sticks to draw figures on the sand of the east seashore.

Later, as a self-supporting student at the UP College of Fine Arts, he worked his way through school as a silkscreen artist for outdoor billboards.

After graduation, he ventured into the advertising industry and worked there for almost 20 years. He landed top-notch artistic assignments from the original Kentucky Group.

Greg never fell short from gaining in the '70s, when patronage for the arts was on the rise. He has not looked back since.

"Viewers are touched by Greg's capture of the moments and the natural," writes Richard Causey in his introduction to the artist's book. "His colors, hues and light treatment are effortless and pleasing as they flow and combine, creating not just a painting but a satisfying experience, an experience as satisfying as various lunchtime dinners from Greg's delicious goat or ox antrol, to bring names to the menus."

As concerned art critic Dr. Ped. Perez-Pinto avows: "Bolaños's love for the alchemy of stones which can make the most ordinary thing appear special."

Guests of honor in the launch are National Artist Napoleon Abueva, Philippine Tatler magazine editor Chit Ljanco, art patrons Gina Lopez and Alberto Lim, Press, and Asian Investment Bank executive director Richard Stanley.

Hosted by Greg Bolaños" is a Philippine Graphics Book. Call Bolaño Restaurant (722-0496) or Lilibeth Valdez Gallery (892-1806/6661).

"BIRD-LOVER"

THE LARGE Photographers (clockwise from top left): Wig Romero, BenCab, Nino Bautista, Puerto Feraler, Jojo Gaingana, Jaime Zobel, Emil Flamenco and Quincy Castillo

Abstract photo exhibit

"LARGE & ASS EXHIBIT OR Photo-Abstraction," featuring works by artists/photographers Nino Bautista, BenCab, Quincy Castillo, Emil Flamenco, Puerto Feraler, Jojo Gaingana, Wig Tyrone Romero, and Jaime Zobel, opens March 8 at the SM Mall of Asia, and will run until March 19. The dramatic art photo incorporates many ideas & is 3D here, a remarkable scale for Philippine photo exhibits. The exhibit will host major SM malls around the country until Aug. 14. Call 4943679 or 0917-5266573.

'Basilia ng Malolos': Kudos to a new 'sarswela'

From page C1

bring the nation's status to the level of the Spaniards, or, alternately to colonialism. More important, learning the language would enable the Filipinos to learn liberal ideas and foster unity that could challenge colonial rule.

The incident had enough to put an end to modesty which in those times meant submissiveness to the mandates, especially the Mass. The time, therefore, meant to the national hero's sister, to inject outrage with her "head bowed" of "upraised fists raised on her knees," as well as to "blind obedience," by advising cede that which is "irresistible and just."

The laudable act of the feminine manner can be construed as a bold step toward the liberation of women that has gained significant support now in Philippine society. For this reason, Basilia Tarrosa and her husband or colleagues deserve to be considered for advancing the feminine cause for equal footing with men.

The subject of a book published in 2004, "The Women of Malolos," written by scholar and author Nestor S. Tongson, the story has been made into a contemporary sarswela, with director by Tongson himself, music by Joy Marfil and direction by Jose Estrella, presented by the UP Theatre Guild. Theatre at the Fil, Frida Mo. Guerrero Theater, UP Diliman.

The story is woven around Basilia Tarrosa, a spinster who has embraced the struggle for women's liberation, and the intellectual's liberation as well.

In petitioning for the opening of a night school, she is portrayed as a relentless fighter against Padilimanes in establishing the Asociacion Feminista Filipina, Club de Mujeres de Malolos and many more, she is also portrayed as constantly supporting the liberation in the struggle of the revolutionaries against Spain and the US.

There women came from the educated class who used "silver spoons" and fine Chinese crockery. They refused to be appointed as chair, hence, in a women-only ballad in the Spanish-colonial period as *mujer de la casa*, whose task was simply to preserve, attend to the needs of the family and do household chores, apart from serving their husbands.

Instead, they single enlightenment in order to break the chains that bound the people to ignorance.

"Basilia of Malolos" has therefore become a fitting era for a contemporary *sarswela* that dramatize the myth of women as weak. To achieve this, Tongson has infused the true irish outrage of the period, thus provide direct contrast to the liberation times of the one's transposed are fashioned times from the works of the period such as Fr. Modesto Castro's "Ang Pagsusulatan ng Dalawang Binibini sa si Urbana at si Felisa," which spelled the custom of urbanity meant to propagate intellectually so-necessary to maintaining the colonial order.

Reference is made, not rightly so, to Rizal's novel, "Noli Me Tangere," whose romantic characters appear to have no overbearing values at all, appearing more as caricatures than paragons. On the positive side, reference is likewise made to "Matinkas at Maganda," an outrageous legend of creation which puts men and women on equal footing, providing direct contrast to the Western biblical story of creation.

The contrast, indeed, is striking, as it becomes easy for the audience to understand the dramatic idea that is conveyed by the sarswela. History becomes clearer and issues become prominent as theatrical work are tore down to achieve a time-discipline dimension, thus allowing an intimate inter-textual dialogue among them to determine the theme.

Not traditional

We relish the carnivalesque as a historical theme that has become part and parcel of cultural present life, it desires completely from the traditional genre that is meant to entertain with a music rife exuberance the conveyance of the thematic idea. Tongson has aptly said in his matter that "Basilia" is opposed to the traditional sarswela, which is meant to entertain and has an epilogue, happy resolution.

"Basilia," he says, introduced social as well as political ideas at the turn of the 20th century to dramatize the struggle of the Malolos Women for liberation against both the Spanish friars and the Filipino partisans. The logic of this assertion eloquently attests to Tongson's fastidiousness with role particular grace both as creator and critic. He definitely knows his stuff.

The musical setting follows this consideration, but it is never sacrificed to give prime importance to the conception of his political idea. The music, in fact, registers on the same level: it is an equal footing with the text, thus framing the sarswela truly a fine music dresser where the two disciplines are evenly fused.

The music differs from the traditional sarswela. There are no overpowering songs that entirely sanctimoniality or mimetic likewise, there is no emerging to circumscription exerted by the accompaniment. Instead the composer uses straightforward music in renewing the theater of the past in order to give the distinct sounds like a revelation, except for some musing that are not (are) identifiable.

Traditional cultural forms such as the kundiman, dance, or *sarsuela* are used to capture the spirit of the period and provide the much needed local flavor or color. Hence, the inclusion of the music of "Sinolayang Balisog," Modesto "Ode sinag Tala" (with text by Rizal) and "Valse Incognoso."

Elegant twist

But there's an elegant twist, an eloquent tone de force achieved through the inclusion of the music of Handel and Beethoven, all done to good taste.

The narrative is infused with a sophisticated Handelian cadence taken from the staccato "The Messiah" ("Lumbos 'ki"), used in the chaos like rendition of libertin del Pilar's problem, "ang Sampung Utos ng Pasile" from "Handel at Valentina"), which is a parody of the "Ten Commandments."

Then all of a sudden strains of Beethoven's "Chorale" from the Ninth Symphony, incorporated with rhythmic and melodic fuses from the grand "Hallelujah Chorus" by Handel, have one to the rendition of a monologue chorus, "Nigeria ka (Ang Lupang)," which bathetic power re-embodies a person's spirit. Such irreverence and alcoholic admixture became powerful dramatic means of highlighting the sarswela's intent of glorious emancipation.

For here else would one encounter the eminence of the friar's dominance except through satire or parody? Here else would one mock a dated conventional hypocrisy except through melodic Beethovenian irony?

Basilia's adept direction provides a singleness of focus for such a play of epic proportion, juxtaposing the audience's attention to the left, without losing them. Action unfolds clearly, following a convincing logical flow. Choreography by Jenny Gamus exhibits action, Gravity felt in the intimate lighting, artistic together with the sinister sets and appropriate costume design and direction, executed by Ariel Ito Basilia, Lualenda Bonnevera, John Abel and Mele Samonte, respectively, makes the sarswela truly a creative collaboration.

The cast is powerful. They all know how to carry a musical line, staying warmly on pitch as their passionate choir lines with the ensemble cast. The voices are quite natural and perhaps did not require any schooling, except for Sushaira Carmelia, "Tara," which sounds elegantly placed.

Jessy Antonio plays well the role, opposite Nilo Magleya, her leading man, a revolutionary, who exemplifies as the lofty male characteristic. Ferdgens pure thing-matrix manipulation to highlight the dramatic impact of the sarswela. This is achieved with this contrived love affair that fails to be understood in inconsistency relies a third party hindrance and frustrating announces the man to be wedded to her husband.

Likewise, the subversion in Benito Cailles' Stella Perfecta, the novel upon which Pepito "Bell" was based, a theme, in its classism all the more delivers the revolutional ambiance pervading Malolos and to women around the country.

In the end, Tongson nevertheard the many inconsistencies of the Malolos women who are now prominent persons in their respective professional callings.

The sarswela is for keeps, and deserves many repeated four more performances are slated for the sarswela's extended run at the same venue on March 8, 10 a.m., March 9, 7 p.m.; and March 10, 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.

WOMEN of Malolos show their support for the Katipunan-led revolution against Spain.

NATIVIDAD Zarrosa as Marcia Gloaging and title character Basilia

Icons of St. Joseph on exhibit

A BACOLOD-MADE EXHIBIT WILL OPEN at the Museo de Santo Domingo in Quezon City as part of the celebrations commemorating the centennial of the canonical coronation of Our Lady of the Rosary, La Nieve de Manila, as Patroness of the Philippines. The fourth and fifth in a series of exhibits will begin on March 20 and 24, respectively.

The fourth exhibit "San José, Esposo de la Virgen" will feature various images and depictions of St. Joseph, the patron of the universal church. Gino Miscangas said his early 20th century image is the centerpiece of the exhibit, together with the Cofradía de San José

SAN JOSE (courtesy photo, an early 20th century piece courtesy of Dino Miscangas)

headed by Ruby Tiu's.

Other images and icons will be provided by designers Mario Cuerpo, Steve de Leon, Fr. Roland dela Rosa, OP, Fr. Pedro Reyes, OP, Irma Bernales, Ting Escobar, Bren Antique Shop, Tesoro Manio, and museum curator Ike Morales.

The special veneration of St. Joseph began in the 1st when the apocryphal "History of Joseph" enjoyed great popularity in the fourth to the seventh centuries. In the 15th century that the veneration of St. Joseph in the west became widespread when he was proclaimed by pope Sixtus IV as the Roman calendar in 1475. The devotion was particularly popularized by St. Teresa of Avila and St. Francis of Sales.

The chapter of the shrine, Rev. Fr. Roberto Pasay, OP will open the exhibit on March 24 at 4:30 p.m., with a blessing of the interior lobby of Santo Domingo Convent. The exhibit runs until March 30.

The fifth exhibit "Misterios Dolorosos" will open at the Museo on March 24 and will run until April 6. It highlights the evocative characters of Santo Domingo Church, with rare images, icons, photos and prints of the suffering Christ and the Mater Dolorosa on exhibit.

SAN JOSE from the collection of Ike Morales

NAZARENO (Nazarene, crowned by Tom Jones

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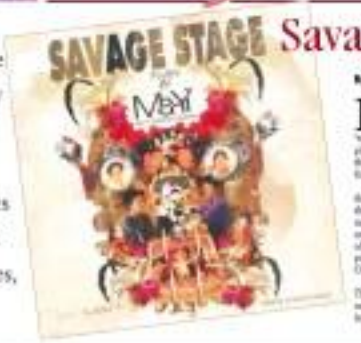
MONDAY, MARCH 5, 2007 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER D1

LIFESTYLE

Savage plays, itinerant arts

The Ma-yi Theater Company's "Savage Theater" anthology and CCP's "Lakbay Sining" stories expand perspectives on Asian-American and Filipino cultures, respectively



By Gilles Cuella

IN 2005, THE FORD FOUNDATION launched a new grant-making program for the arts called re-imagining. Re-dubbed grab most "to re-imagine, strengthen, and reflect on cross-cultural artistic and organizational practice at time through the lens of changing demographics in the United States."

In other words, the grant "aims to investigate this creation of art in a fast-changing USA—how the changing demographics, urban culture, mixed near-lights and all that impact on the creation of art, and even just plain creation for fun also because of the new types of tools available—video, film, improving installation art, theater," explains Jorge Ortiz[illegible].

Ortiz[illegible] is the executive director of the Ma-yi Theater Company of New York, a troupe founded and run by Filipino artists and dedicated to staging all-original works by Asian-American plays.

Stopping abruptly doesn't work for everyone. Reducing the number of cigarettes you smoke before completely quitting is a clinically proven alternative. Start by cutting down a target number of cigarettes that you smoke each day, while using Nicorette to control your cravings. Then it's easier to quit for good.

Cut down with nicorette then stop.

Doctors back smoking reduction to successful quitting

Doctors again discouraging [illegible] habit to break, as tobacco dependence is both physical and psychological. They know that going "cold turkey" may not work for all smokers since it results in strong will and determination. One alternative to this is smoking reduction which may be suitable for smokers who cannot stop abruptly but whose ultimate goal is to eventually [illegible].

Smoking reduction can be defined as a sustained decrease in cigarette consumption in smokers who are unable or not ready to quit abruptly.

Dr. Lenart Fernandez, Clinical Associate at the UP College of Medicine, Philippine General Hospital, says the benefit in cutting down on cigarette intake is a step of considerably dropping smoking. "Clinical studies have shown that cutting down smokers to [illegible] in smoking cessation. The good thing about this method is that the smoker, now to be successful quitter, goes through the process with control and at his own pace."

Just within 30 minutes of dropping the cigarette stick, healing takes place within the smoker's body. "Studies have shown that cutting down by 50% will increase the chances of success, while cuts done within 6 months," added Fernandez.

Cutting down on cigarette smoking, when supplemented by Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) prevents many persons NRT is the use of various forms of nicotine delivery methods intended to replace nicotine obtained from smoking or other tobacco products.

Nicorette nicotine gum, a form of NRT, doubles the chances of successfully quitting smoking by providing the body with the nicotine it craves without all the harmful chemicals found in a cigarette such as tar and carbon monoxide. Nicorette gum has been clinically proven safe and effective to use. The World Health Organization advocates the use of NRT products, such as the Nicorette gum, as available tool in the fight against cigarette smoking, and supports its use by smokers who wish to break the habit.

Nicorette can be used by smokers who want to quit immediately or those who would want to reduce their cigarette consumption as a way to completely quitting for good.

Nicorette can be purchased without prescription in all Mercury Drugstores nationwide. For more information on Nicorette, you can log onto [illegible].

Lola Bebang's radio days

By Johnathan Libarios Rondina
Correspondent

BORN IN 1913 IN IMUS, CAVITE, MANILA, Genoveva Edroza Matute recalls that in her time women walked slightly behind their husbands and were mostly housewives after marriage and after children. Against this backdrop of lifestyle domineering, Lola Bebang rose a name in the wilderness, conquering western characters that, much like herself, were ahead of their time.

There is a quite defiance in Lola Bebang's every strike-struggle to conquer the short distance between her bedroom and the living room where a group of college students are waiting to interview her for a school project. At 92, Genoveva Edroza Matute, esteemed columnist and celebrated feminist, continues to defy time with grace, wit, humor, and a deep tongue in front.

"We were fighters. Hindi kami nagpapa-api," she answers, when asked how she wants to be remembered.

Radio's golden age

Although many remember Matute as a writer of school stories and columns, her decade-long stint as a soap opera writer during Philippine radio's golden age was significant in the formation of a feminist consciousness via the airwaves.

After World War II, serialized dramas or "soaps" hailed as such because they were sponsored by soap manufacturers) like Lux Flor's "Gulong ng Palad," Lisandro Arevalo "Sino ng Tatanda," and Mateo's "Mula sa Puso ang Pagsinta" were the mainstay among Filipinos who gathered around their gigantic radio sets to hear and struggle, weep and rejoice with celebrities like Mario Montes and Rita Rosal. In the days before video killed the radio star, radio was king and Matute was the royal scribe who wrote about women protagonists who were strong-willed, educated, professional, and unfortunate.

"Siyam sana ang aabuting kwentuhan," Matute remembers, "Pero sa akin hindi dala yung kabuang isang pak ng sosi. Sa sobra hindi kita yun. Akala ko, kaya! Sa akin yung mga kaibuan ko! Kaya ang sabi nga nila: Di bale naman ang sayo, ang mahalaga ang mga kabuan dyan sa puso mo." Dramatic, kasi ako mismong akoda."

Post-colonial resistance

Her courageous spirit also pushed Lola Bebang to the forefront of many other ideological battles. Because soaps were then produced by American manufacturing companies, American executives intervened in the creative process, often dictating plots and characters. Once, she recalls an American executive insisting that a female character with the name of Ang, "In the Philippines we don't walk our dogs," she retorted, "Over dito, they sit and sip cappuccino!"

Matute wears sunlight on-site entertainer but feminist sensibilities were and Flor, her sisters, against Anglicized misrepresentations. "Ay hindi-hindi mainis si Lina Flor, 'ang ka nang makipagaaway. Hindi naman yun, pinagtatanggol nya ang mga kapatid. Hindi naman sila makakapag-Tagalog, English sila nang kanilang tatlo, si Lina pang Pranses. Ako, si Lina nag-aaway-away. Sus ang sabihan nanang Anlo. Pagkatapos nanood dito pupo labas tulo, hindi naman sila nanonood. Akala nila, binabaya ng nanay. Hindi kung sila alam."

Love for country

Today, in her twilight, Lola Bebang's national is resolute romantic steadfast. As her audience of young collegians gather around her listening intently and eager to inherit her pearls of wisdom, she gifts them with her words. "Ang maaasahan ko, ang mga kabataan ang kapag-asa. Hindi bale kung kaunting kayo dahil sabong madami, dahil sabong dadalapuan dito. Pero, ang naman 'yung pagbuhos na hindi ka nabibilang ay kapag mo."

For her pioneering work as a feminist writer for radio, Genoveva Edroza-Matute will receive the St. Hildegard Award for Women in Media from the Philippine Women's University Program of St. Scholastica's College (SSC) at 6 p.m. today at the St. Cecilia's Hall of the SSC Campus along Leon Guinto, Malate. The other members are Dr. Nora Quisholt for development communication; Pony the Ina Angeles-Bautista for children's television; and QTV Channel 11 for artistic excellence in programming. The awards ceremonies are open to the public. Call 5216363.

SHE WROTE the classic "Rosweco in Malate," she first aired Pelaez's grand grins entrance for the short-lived

MATURE: "We were fighting women"

HARRIED in Epifanio Molecin, writer of the classic radio play, "Kanawang Kuwara"

92-year-old writer Genoveva Edroza Matute will receive the St. Hildegard Award for Women in Media

Savage plays, itinerant arts

From page B1

wright. He can speak knowledgeably about Antigraphy, because out of some 500 story narratives in one thirst his who were invited to apply for program grants. Ma-yi was one of only nine that were ostensibly chosen.

"We were like only theater company to be chosen, and on top of that we were the only 50-based company so we were really flattered and excited," he says.

The other grantees represent groups of diverse artistic persuasions, including the Arab-American Museum in Detroit, the Hungarian Vibe Gallery in Florida dedicated to works by Caribbean immigrants), the Native Indian Intertheaters Alliance, the storytellers represented by the Chicago Public Art Group.

Enthusiastic reviews

Ma-yi's grant of around $140,000 is spread over a two-year period, which will end this year. The financial support is an institutional vote of confidence to what the theater company does here: position groundbreaking plays on the thorny American experience that have won for it a raft of fine awards, as well as enthusiastic reviews from New York's most unforgiving theater critics.

"We were ourselves in doing new work, all original work," says Chenoll. "There is a subculture in which in order to exist, you prefer to commission, develop, workshop a play to death and finally produce it, or have it cast, since we can't possibly produce everything that we commission."

Many of the plays that Ma-yi has successfully staged since its founding in 1989 now appear in book form. "Savage Stage," an anthology edited by its director Lisbeth Cater. The book, one of the projects Ma-yi has undertaken in the wake of its demographic grant, features a pan-Asian superhero, a play by Ch-Jessie Filipina, Vietnamese, Thai, Cambodian, Laotian and Burmese artists in the American playwright.

"The feminism of Magtes Rubio' was by a white playwright, Lonnie Carter, but based on a Filipino story and the characters were all Filipinos. But writers don't have to be exclusively Asian or Asian American, but rather the theme has to be Asian or Asian-American, or the playwright is, or both," says Chenoll.

The collection includes "Middle Finger" by Han Ong (recently adapted to Filipino by Nicanor Tiongson and presented as "Middle Finger Sa Iyo" by Tiongsong Arevalo), "Women From the Other Side of the World" by Linda Hogan-Ball, "Where" by Sung Rno, "Brad by Where" by Qui Nguyen, "Savage Acts"—a collaborative work by Ko-Cod Chen, Jorge Ignacio Cortiñas, Sung Rno and Sung Rno, "Filipinomerica" by Rudy Soria (Ma-yi's first big triumph, praised by the

NY press as "stylish ... fierce and compelling"), "Betrayal/Bayan" by Chris Millado, "The Romance of Magno Rubio" by Lonnie Carter and Lee Sa-rona Crow (Ma-yi's longest-running and most awarded production), and "Project Bahaghari" by Ralph Peña and Sung Rno.

Why "Savage Stage?" As the two explain in her comprehensive introduction, Ma-yi's plays are a means to interrogate the "trope of savagery" that has been used against non-Western peoples to justify colonization and imperialist aggression.

"The creation of a theater of disturbance, the use of elements of the savage as weapons of dissent and history as a strategy of radical theater" are means to "confront and counter" contemporary ideas of "foreign and exotic." Otherwise, "The colonization of Western civilized society."

"Savage Stage" will be launched in Manila in July this year. Anyone interested in the uniquely brilliant theatrical discourse offered by the "first-ever" (New York Times) Ma-yi Theater Company should have a copy of this book.

Cultural development

Another book that deserves space in any theater buff's bookshelf is the recently published "Cultural Development: The Role of Development in the Philippines," published by the Cultural Center of the Philippines with Ani Publishing.

The book is a collection of stories related to the CCP's thirteenth and Incharge Program, which celebrated the 25th anniversary in 2004. It was this program that helped CCP shed its image as an elitist, landlubbi institute by bringing to the country's re-thing premiere plays and musical performances that previously were only accessible in Manila. Conversely, it also spearheaded efforts to cultivate grassroots and community efforts in the arts, giving heritage and crossfire groups in the provinces the chance to excel with and appreciate each author's artistic activities.

"Lakbay Sining"'s stories are written by reallife theater who were in the think of the action they describe.

"Pecor ng Bagong" by Armando Ste. Ana offers a thorough accounting of the many programs Bulacan initiated in its pioneering push to preserve its rich history and culture. Archalomel playwright Wanlee Jacob writes in "The Dreams of Philippine Theater" hour this art form "tied to healing power" and how it can act over its place in community ritual and consciousness.

Funny reading

The travails of ordinary cultural workers make for poignant and funny reading, reminding us of the television dimensions required in propagating art and cultivate appreciation in a country soaked to the bone in fancy Western influences.

Jove Aguila, for instance, kicks off in "Chalk on Soup for Artists on Tour" what it takes to go on tour and introduce Filipino audiences to an unfamiliar genre—in that case, the Bagong Lumad music, "music and book and word-based and [is] characterized" by the cues of Mindoro arts and culture without much "fuss."

Rya Ibrigim in "Living It, Loving It" recalls how research for a planned production by the Marian-based String Ensemble theater group led to both some shock and sublime experiences involving jungle and mountain to reach the famous tribe of Zambonga.

And Herminio Beltran Jr. documents, in "Why theater lessons can be found in the liberation ideals of Dewey and Isabela," the indigenous community just waiting to be tapped to undertake pedagogical experiment left, from Bohemian to Bohol encouraging native songs to Iloilo high school teachers launching into poetry and performance.

Obinggay Isaacson-Bermudez, in her introduction to the collection of stories, calls "Lakbay Sining" "a treasure trove of insights and theoretical discourses on practice and processes in the Philippine profession." It is that, and so much more...a profile of the Filipino artist as unsung hero of our age.

E-mail the author at grande@inquirer.com.ph; visit www.gilbo.edu.com

UST holds centennial forum on Alejandro Abadilla, father of modern Tagalog poetry

THE UNIVERSITY OF SANTO Tomas will hold the Alejandro G. Abadilla Centennial Forum on March 10, 1 to 5 p.m., at the Central Library Hall of the Miguel de Benavides Central Library Bldg., UST campus, Manila.

Organized by the Department of Languages, Literature and Philosophy of the Faculty of Arts and Letters, and the Thomasian Alumni Association, part of UST, the forum will feature papers and discussions on Abadilla (born March 18, 1906; died Aug. 26, 1969; Litt.B Philosophy, UST, 1931), the father of modern Tagalog poetry.

National Artist and Summa Magnaque laureate Bienvenido Lumbera will deliver the keynote address. Plenary lecturers are Efren Abueg of De la Salle University-Dasmariñas and Rhoderick Nuncio of UST.

There will be two panel discussions. Discussants are Belarmino Alumnarez of Mariano Gallego mul UST; Barry Bonifacio of Ateneo and UST; Roland Tolentino of UP Diliman; Hilda Cornica of Ateneo and UST; and Vim Nadera of UP Diliman.

The forum is open to the public. Call Prof. Ferdinand Lopez, 0917-5373168.

2007 Dumaguete writers workshop launched

SILLIMAN ARTIST FOR LITERature (SAFL 1, Tiempo has announced a March 31 deadline for applications for fellowships to the National Writers Workshop to be held in Dumaguete City from May 7 to 25.

Applicants seeking fellowships in poetry, short story and creative nonfiction, all in English, should submit a minimum of eight poems or two or three stories or personal essays for the respective genres, in hardcopy as well as in a Word file disk.

Additional requirements are a letter of application, CV, two color photos, and at least one reference letter from a literature or creative writing professor or a nationally recognized writer.

Fellowships will cover board and lodging for three weeks, a modest stipend, and round-trip honoraria of travel fares to the requisite and back.

Interested parties may also apply for an in or outdoing privileges. Address all communication to Dr. Edith L. Tiempo, 2nd Floor, GAP Bldg, Real Blvd, Dumaguete City 6300.

The National Writers Workshop was established by Edith and Edilberto Tiempo in 1963, making it the longest-running creative writing workshop in Asia. Its 44th edition this summer is co-sponsored by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, GAP College, and Silliman University, in coordination with the Executive Hoang Foundation, Inc. and the Dumaguete Literary Arts Interim Group or DELA, Inc. headed by Atty. Gracian Sagacad Ong.

Classes in the fellowship program include Susanna Edgardo J. Angara and Mar Anna as well as former NCCA Chairman Jesus Lagwad Mr.D'Aniel Padilla.

Among the poets invited to the workshop are Tiempo; Dumaguete-based writers Ma. Bobby Villasis and Gene Rish Aquino, as well as guest panelists Dr. Gemino H. Abad, Dr. Marjorie Evasco, Susan Lara, Jose Reyes, Dr. Anthony Tan and Boy Vasco.

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Encore for 'Virtuoso Strings'

By Arnaldi Ma. Guerrero
Contributor

LAST YEAR THE "Virtuoso Strings" concert was conducted on a big scale at the Cultural Center of the Philippines, with two symphony orchestras and a battery of 12 pianists. This week, on March 9 at 8 p.m. to be exact, the organizers are planning to duplicate, if not surpass, this feat.

The encore for "Virtuoso Strings" will bring together 120 instrumentalists, plus baritone soprano Nathalie Cornelio and dancers from Ballet Philippines. "It's something that has never been done before here and maybe abroad," claimed a member of one of the sponsoring organizations, Olga Martel of Ateneo Alumni Society, in a press conference on CCP.

Perhaps to underscore the point, she turned over to CCP president Nestor Jardiel a check of P1.600 million which the PAS was able to raise for the event. "Virtuoso Strings" will be staged at the CCP's Tanghalang Nicanor Abelardo (Main Theater) on March 9.

Sharing the presence, the University of Santo Tomas (UST) Guitar Ensemble led by Ruben F. Reyes displayed their virtuosity (just not extended) skills with Ravena...Mangoni's "Tanos Bergamo," while the youthful Cuerda Lira Orchestrum Bonifacio under the direction of Lino Montejo, delighted the audience with their rendition of Vivaldi's Spring from the "Four Seasons."

Claude Baliwas, North Asia CEO of BMP Pavilion, main sponsor of the concert and one of the largest banks in the world, said it has policy of sponsoring cultural events and at one time supported the largest piano competition, which was held in Europe.

"It is business alone," the frankness added, "but CCP is one of the best venues where we can project our presence in the Philippines." He, Dalawer said, has "a 25-year-old friendship with CCP for his Filipino friends, he noted, "they are an unconscious factor."

The other performers in the concert are violinist Alfonso "Coke" Beltran, cellist Renato Lucas, pianist Rhoy Ann Espina, and show underscore The Philharmonic Orchestra under Eugene Castillo, the Metro Manila Community Orchestra led by Chino Toledo, and the UST Symphony Orchestra conducted by Herminigildo Ramos.

Classic artists are violinist Angelo Xand of Germany and classical guitarist Thibault Cauvin of France.

The program is an eclectic mix of works by European, Filipino and American composers, ranging from Bach's Concerto in D Minor for two violins, strings and continuo) to Willy Cruz's "Kung Maghintay Ang Walang Hanggan."

There will be also a medley of Beatles songs as arranged by leading composer Chino Toledo of the MMCO.

"This is a 'plus' to broaden the audience and to attract as many people as we can," said stage director Chris Millado.

Erika Ramores will "enhance" the music, while soprano Cornelia will demonstrate "the human voice as an instrument." Another "surprise" will be guitarist soloing in from the aisles to serenade the audience.

For tickets to "Virtuoso Strings," call 8521131.

UST Symphony Orchestra

CHIMO Kiosio

CLAUDE Baliwas (BMP Pavilion)

Catanduanes fundraiser

THE GRADUATIONS OF the pavement of St. Scholastica's College, Manila will have a variety show on Women's Day, March 8, titled "Pinaya n. Power" at 8:15 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. The teachers and staff perform excerpts from "Why Women Would Die Both er" and "A Midsummer Night's Dream." Proceeds will go to the typhoon victims of Catanduanes. For inquiries, call 5247500.

CineVita to screen film based on John Paul II play

"MOTHER TERESA," THE film biography of the Nobel Peace laureate and canonized saint, and "The Jeweller's Shop," the film adaptation of John Paul Co three-act play on love and marriage, will be the opening and closing foreign films of the CineVita Filmfestival on March 7-8, at the Tolosan Aquitain Research Center, University of Santo Tomas, Espana, Manila.

Organized by the Instituto, the 79-year-old student publication of UST, the festival will run local and international features, shorts, documentaries, and digital films that showcase life-affirming stories of spirituality, cultural and moral formation, family values, and personal and social renewal.

MOTHER Teresa

The 40-in-line celebration "life, truth and faith" through the movies.

Films crafting theatrical themes will be shown: Rina Bernardo's "9Q Bad #7" (restoration); Perdie Philippines' "Signos Ex. Pelopinas #67" (direction); "Bethlehi" ni Mena ell", and "MOS: What You Heard Been Told." Also to be shown is the musical movie, "Dongkoi, Pangina, Bunso Ko Gimmel?" with narration to Filipino by Shaina Catarin.

Internationally acclaimed Filipino films with social, moral and religious dimensions to be shown include Mike Tolentino's "Unanyel"; Jeffrey Atienza's "Kalbaryo"; and Ik Ilustre Mordenio's "Manoro," which is the official opening movie of CineVita.

Prominent personalities will give lectures on film and media ethics such as Gerardolyn Filmfestival vice president Lourdes Guillen Soyanon selena and Monsignor ng Archbishop Pelopino Rita cotin Leo Zamora, local film director Rica Arevalo, UST media arts professor Josephine Sanchez and Tina Monsalve Media Center director. It's Christian Bautista.

Highlights of the film will give short talks, and the cast and crew of "Manoro" and "Sabwatan" including Jennifer Affleing and Chess Pumaloy, will grace the festival.

CineVita is a nonprofit and educational endeavor of the Varsitarian together with the Tomas Aquinas Center Media Programs, YouLife Philippines, UST Institute of Religious, UST Journalism Society and UST Literary Society.

All documentaries and local films are open to the public. Foreign full-length films are exclusive to lecturers, film critics and students. Admission is free. Visit www.varsitarian.com; call 4061611 loc. 8225.

FROM BOOK TO FILM

'Notes on a Scandal' shocks and provokes

By Eldin Paul A. Poredo
Correspondent

THE OLD SAP THAT SEX IS A SOCIAL equalizer has never been examined in the way that "Notes on a Scandal" did when it rolled off bookstore shelves in 2003. Novelist Zoe Heller's sophisticated take on class and sexuality in modern society, fused the level of intimacy to never before, the whole reality-on-all of us be dangerously deceptive.

In "Scandal," Barbara Hunt is the stern puritanical teacher in a midwest school. Her reluctant, bohemian, ignorant of the school's inner workings and unscathed of what lies ahead.

Enamored by the other teacher's carnal appeal and behavioral bar. But it is the history teacher Barbara Covett, who succeeds in getting her trust. At a 20-year veteran in the school, she acts as if everyone, including the staff, is beneath her. She takes offense to Sheba and treats her as an equal. It seems as if she has found a friend to torment and protect, quite a monumental from her otherwise lonely life.

Thus, even when the sex scandal between Sheba and a 15-year-old student breaks out, Barbara sticks to the friendship, shielding Sheba from the attacks. "How soon Boss even, we are bound by the secrets we share," writes Covett, the self-appointed scandal to the 'ghosted by theater royal' Dame Judi Dench). And Sheba, (generally Cate Blanchett) is appreciative of Covett's persistent friendship.

The characters, however, are far from equal.

While Sheba looks like she leads a fairly good life, with a successful solicitor as husband (Bill Nighy), and with two children (one has Down Syndrome, the other is a selfish teenage girl), she resorts to the attention of her student. Steven Connolly (newcomer Andrew Simpson), a match to that she enters into sexual relationship with him. This reveals a crack in our image of Sheba, frantically caused after the Bill-Scott figure seeks out Pix King Dench).

If it is told that Sheba is craving for Bill, the reveal of the scandal, however, we from what readers and viewers would expect as carrying a provocative film, reveals more about her own personage. The twist is chilling.

In the movie, however, the twist is realized not as subtle—a usual defeat in movie adaptations, considering the limited time to tell the story.

Great performances

But where the twist is lost, the actors step in. And we could doubt the competence of the actors in this movie. Nominee will be award by the nominations of Dench—from her usual eccentric portrayals into this movie's flighty old bigot. The multi-faceted Blanchett gives a sense of humanity to Sheba.

The movie is as director Ritchell Eyre has to stay of something unbelievable into the story. The music is sublime, and the cinematography uniform. With Dench's take on Barbara's decline, there is at once no effort to make the indifference years of the character. Somewhere along the way, Barbara seems jubilant. Perhaps that is why her latest venture is all the more shocking when

CATE Blanchett and Judi Dench give powerful performances

BILL Nighy plays husband to Blanchett's sexual predator character

it is unleashed, and the scenes all the more painful. Blanchett, for all the stereotypes of her is also difficult to paint.

But even the actors, in turn, contribute to the original material. True, Heller deserves a relentlessly successful perceived as odious and weighty patron truths against those of "unprincipled" society.

On Heller's alleged crime: Barbara has this to write: "Connolly was officially a subject, and Sheba's actions were, officially speaking, exploitative—yet my honest assessment of them as fascinating would have to acknowledge not only that Connolly was acting of his own volition but that he actually wielded more power in the relationship than Sheba. I don't think for a moment that he has suffered lasting hurt from his experiences with an older woman. On the contrary, I believe that he's had a rather thrilling ride. Boring I know. But there it is: what I think."

Ultimately, the story tells much about its narrator on the subject. We get to know that Barbara is by no means a truthful storyteller. We get to realize that her narration is tainted by her own motives, strained through years that no desperately desired another pair to unravel them.

Hence, we ask if the story about Sheba's scandal is even the truth. In that Heller would. We ask if we could, but not hence speaking while dragged with her own actions.

Also is a social construct, so the adage says. But what becomes of that relativism? In what comes out of it? In a world where cause by a other creatures on this, we might do well to think twice before imbibing the stories from another's lips.

"Notes on a Scandal" will screen exclusively at Ayala Cinemas starting March 7.

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Bronnie O. Velarde

CHEER FACTOR

CHOCOLATE OSCAR

Spanish actress Penelope Cruz visits a chocolate "Academy Award" on display at the Arizona Theatre in San Marino, during the 07th Indian Music Festival on Friday. Other international guests were Molly Parkash of Canada, Beggar of Indonesia, Joel & Mimi Brenner, Norah Jones and John Legend of the US.

AJ 'shocked'

"IT WAS DEFINITELY A SHOCK," 19-Am AJ Tabaldo said of his elimination from "American Idol" on Thursday (Friday in Manila).

He didn't see it coming, he told Inquirer Entertainment in a conference call only Saturday morning, "considering what the judges told me [on performance night, Wednesday]."

AJ admitted he had felt "confused and upset." "Unlike other semi-finalists, he stated, he didn't get extra exposure via a feature footage that might have helped him become a fan base. AJ believed those who did were honored to the voting viewers.

On the other hand, the 22-year-old said, he was happy to leave the show on a good note. After singing Stevie Wonder's "Feeling Good" on performance night, AJ had gotten good reviews from all three judges, including hard-to-please Simon Cowell, who said, "That was actually very good."

AJ refused to say whether he thought he was more qualified than a few left behind. He simply said, "I was up there with the better singers. I wish I could've stayed longer but this is not only a singing competition, it is a reality show as well."

Three others booted this week were Mania Alexander, Leslie Ross, and Nicholas Pedroche-Fortune Joyce.

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2 DREAMGIRLS Sneak Preview
3 GHOST RIDER
4 FLUSHED AWAY EPIC MOVIE
5 YOU GOT ME
6 IT'S A BOY GIRL THING
7 KABUL EXPRESS MUSIC and LYRICS
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9 THE NUMBER 23
10 PRIMEVAL

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7 ROME and JULIET

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6 DREAMGIRLS Sneak Preview
7 PRIMEVAL
8 IT's A BOY GIRL THING

NOVALICHES

1 PRIMEVAL
2 YOU GOT ME
3 IT'S A BOY GIRL THING
4 FLUSHED AWAY
5 EPIC MOVIE
6 GHOST RIDER

PIONEER

1 PRIMEVAL
2 FLUSHED AWAY
3 YOU GOT ME
4 DREAMGIRLS Sneak Preview

STA. ROSA

1 PRIMEVAL
2 THE FOUNTAIN
3 TROIKA
4 YOU GOT ME

LIPA

1 GHOST RIDER
2 YOU GOT ME
3 THE CLEANER
4 TROIKA
5 BABEL

DASMARINAS

1 BOK
2 MUSIC and LYRICS
3 YOU GOT ME
4 PRIMEVAL

ANGELES

1 PRIMEVAL
2 YOU GOT ME
3 TROIKA
4 THE FOUNTAIN

IMUS

1 PRIMEVAL
2 BLOOD and CHOCOLATE
3 YOU GOT ME
4 IT'S A BOY GIRL THING

STARMILLS

1 THE FOUNTAIN
2 TROIKA
3 THE PROMISE
4 YOU GOT ME
5 PRIMEVAL
6 GHOST RIDER

BACOLOD

1 MUSIC and LYRICS
2 THE MESSENGERS
3 YOU GOT ME
4 GHOST RIDER
5 PRIMEVAL
6 APOCALYPTO

ILOILO

1 PRIMEVAL
2 YOU GOT ME
3 MUSIC and LYRICS
4 APOCALYPTO
5 BLOOD and CHOCOLATE
6 GHOST RIDER

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MOVIE GUIDE

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DID YOU KNOW...

LONDON — Movie commentators wonder if British actor Daniel Radcliffe could sustain the role of Harry Potter, in light of his recent publicity slots for Peter Shaffer's controversial play "Equus," which "could almost run from his own bat boat."

Radcliffe, 17, has signed up for the final two films in the seven-part Harry Potter series, his spokeswoman told Friday Reuters

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PRIMEVAL
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IT'S A BOY/GIRL THING

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MTRCB PG-13

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A promise unfulfilled

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

BE RIGHT OUT OF THE WAY TO WATCH "The Promise," to see how its stars, Angel Locsin and Richard Gutierrez, would step up their much-touted transformation, from teen dolls to "non-comfort" performers.

Well, they can be credited for doing their decorated, but hard work and doing don't quite do the trick, because the more challenging emotional requirements of their roles to the lavish cinematic approximation of "Wuthering Heights" often elude them.

Their characters start out as childhood soul mates, then fall in love and dream of a beautiful life together. Alas, a wealthy widow is captivated by Angel's obvious charms and Richard is quickly cuckolded out of the equation.

Before he permanently steps out of his life, however, he makes love to Angel (or, the steps of a lighthouse, evens) and she eventually gets pregnant. Angel's wealthy landlord gets ostensibly unhinged by this, and the film rather pell-mell to its operatic—melodramatic—Lorna Tolentino finale.

This dramatic denouement is too big, broad and pathetic for the young leads to manage or redeem. Despite their best efforts, they avoid their rudimentary and melodramatic. It only by default that "Touch," but it the product of miscasting.

In other words, young leads who haven't developed sufficiently shouldn't be rushed to play characters whose emotions are too mature or lush for them to handle. This kind of material would require more maturity, actorly more real perceptive performers, otherwise fictional illusory will elude.

The production also errs by requiring Richard's character to seek forgiveness by disappearing to the big city for some years and sending a lot of money of various subterranean modes, when revealing to Angel (re-emphasized) on a street public, with jewelry and signature sunglasses to complete the post-rich transformation.

Alas, such a major character change can't be managed through the simple use of props and post modes of transportation. What has been lacking in the performers, his passionately having told his soul to the devil? Well, he suffer less and emoticon more, but that's about it.

'Overnight' transition

This is unfortunate, because Richard and Angel are popular young actors who should oppose in good movies, to enhance their reputations and to expose their diverse of buy to better film.

To do well, however, they should be properly cast in roles that they can get more literally comfortable with. So, the Angelica must be should be close to naturally, with the young stars' development serving the part. "Overnight" transitions can be inadequate and thus embarrassing, to say the least.

Despite unfulfilled promises like this production, we continue to hope that, in time, Richard and Angel can finally pull off the perfect combination of judicious casting, good material and competent performance that should be right in their future. They turn 25.

As for the production itself, it too is comical, but too choreographically melodramatic and heavy on its appointing and lacking. As real for "Wuthering Heights" co-starred drama, "Hihintayin Kita Sa Langit," was light in air and benefited greatly from its lovely and dramatic Batanes locations, while "The Promise" is visually lacking and clunkier—can, where's the inspiration?

'Superman Returns'

The $ 0 action-adventure "Superman Returns" now roost on DVD, delivering an epic story, spectacular special effects, exhilarating action and strong performances from Brandon Routh, Kate Bosworth and Kevin Spacey. Bonus features: a "Remembering Jor-El" remembrance, and the full-length documentary, "Requiem for Krypton: Making 'Superman Returns'."

'Crime Stories'

The repercussion of "Crime Stories" began on March 2, 11 p.m. on the Discovery Channel. The investigative series chronicles the most intriguing and baffling crimes, reveals techniques used in solving them, and demolishes what victims' families, consumers and clients experience in the course of the investigation.

Roundup

Int'l award juror

CMA '75 INTERNATIONAL TV HONOR FOR president Wilma Galvante arrived in Japan for the Grand Prix category of the last International Emmys—awards of excellence for TV programs produced outside of the United States.

Galvante attended the seven awards nites at the New York Hilton in Manhattan.

"It was a very rewarding experience to judge and excitedly scrutinize the comedy styles, production values, presentation and scripting of international broadcast networks," said Galvante.

"Little Britain," a BBC program, won the award.

The awards are given out by the International Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, the largest organization of global broadcasters with more than 300 members from nearly 70 countries.

"ASIAN TREASURES"

Asian trips

Viewers of the prime time show "Asian Treasures" will have a chance to visit Singapore, Bangkok and Hong Kong and even take an all-expense paid Singapore Asian Cruise.

Viewers will have to answer the trivia question for the day by texting TREASURE <answer> <name, age, gender, address> to 367.

Open to Smart and Talk 'N Text subscribers, the text promo runs until May 25.

Airing weeknights after "Til Dear" is GMA 7's prime time block, "Asian Treasures" follows Host Robin Padilla and Gabriela Angel tandem as they explore the treasures areas of the country, as well as various Asian destinations, in search of 10 hidden treasures that will lead to the hidden treasures.

Terrorism docu

"Road to Terrorism," the last story in CNN's "World's Untold Stories," will air on March 10, 3 a.m., March 11, 7 a.m. and March 12, 6 a.m.

The documentary is about southern Philippines being a hotbed of terrorist activity, with Jamaah Islamiah, Abu Sayaf and al Qaeda operating in the territory.

The docu provides access to the fight against terrorism in the Philippines at the ground level.

"TWO TWISTED"

Suspense tales

Beginning March 18, Hallmark Channel will be showing "Two Twisted," a dark anthology, on Sunday nights at 11 p.m.

Each episode has two self-contained stories that are sharp, spooky, and suspenseful.

"There's Something About Rosetta" unfolds the mystery of missing objects in a newlyweds' home while "Finding Frank" tells the tale of a fidgety guard who receives a disturbing call from his "supervisor."

March 25's twin bill presents a mysterious phone call that tells a man he has the opportunity to erase the past in "Call Back," and the gruesome truth about a doctor who had a coronary in "Heart Attack."

Platinum album

"Pinoy Dream Academy" Grand Star Dreamer Yeng Constantino's debut solo album "Inspired" earned a gold record award when it sold 15,000 units in a week after its release.

A week later, it was platinum when it sold another 15,000 units.

The Guillermo Mendoza Memorial Scholarship Foundation recently named Yeng the Most Promising Female Recording Artist of 2007.

YENG Constantino

COMICRelief

GARFIELD — BY JIM DAVIS

A. LIPIN — BY EDUARDO

BABY BLUES — BY JERRY SCOTT

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DIVINE COMEDY — BY STEVEN PANDUGAN

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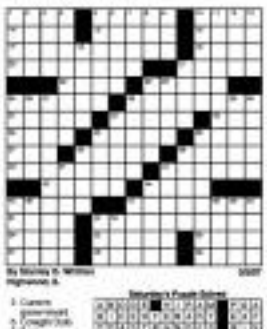

HOROSCOPE

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku — by Dave Green

5	7				2			
2			9			7	4	
			5	1			8	
	9	2	3					7
		4		6		8		
7					1	9	3	
	4			3	6			
	2	5			8			3
			4				2	9

Difficulty Level ★

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Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
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7	1	8	5	3	6	9	2	4
4	5	6	8	9	2	7	1	3
9	8	5	6	2	3	4	7	1
1	6	4	7	8	5	3	9	2
3	2	7	9	1	4	5	6	8
5	7	2	1	4	8	6	3	9
8	3	9	2	6	7	1	4	5
6	4	1	3	5	9	2	8	7

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